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VICTORY BOOKS NO. 5

ENLIST INDIA  
FOR FREEDOM!

by

EDWARD THOMPSON

LONDON  
VICTOR GOLLANCZ LTD  
1940

*First impression August 1940*  
*Second impression October 1940*  
*Third impression November 1940*  
*Fourth impression December 1940*

To  
the Memory of  
C. F. ANDREWS  
and of our quarter-century of  
unbroken friendship

"The real truth is that the public mind cannot be brought to attend to an Indian subject."—*The Duke of Wellington*, December 21, 1805.

"The truth is, my dear Malcolm, that the great ones of this country are not interested in India."—*The same to Sir John Malcolm*, 1817.

"Lord Ellenborough said he was aware of the little interest felt in that House upon any subject connected with the affairs of India, and he knew therefore that it would be irksome both to him and to them to address them at any length on such a subject."—*Hansard*, 23, p. 476: the date March 5, 1834. Lord Ellenborough was President of the Board of Control, precursor of our India Office; he was addressing the House of Lords.

"Indian history has never been made interesting to English readers, except by rhetoric."—*The Times*, February 25, 1892.

"The mere mention of the word *India* is enough to empty the smallest lecture-hall in the City."—*Oxford saying*, circa 1925.

"India? *India!* But what's wrong about India? There's no reason to think about India!"—*A Member of the House of Commons to the author of this book, who was trying to point out that we ought to think about India sometimes*—date, May, 1940.



## PREFACE

ON SEPTEMBER 3, 1939, England declared war on Nazi Germany.

On October 21, the Indian National Congress, which formed the Government in eight of India's eleven Provinces, withdrew its Ministries and India went back under the rule of British officials responsible only to the India Office in Whitehall, not to the Indian People. The deadlock continues to this day.

What is the National Congress? What were its Ministries? Why were they withdrawn? What is the Muslim League which we hear of as inflexibly opposed to Congress and representing a solid block of some seventy million Moslems? What is the present situation in India? Why did our own Government consider it wise, or at any rate unavoidable, to use India's resources and man-power in a gigantic war without having asked India's consent and while India can speak to us only through British or British-supported officials and a few yesmen? Was this course wise? Or unavoidable?

This book tries to answer these questions.

# CONTENTS

## PART I

### THE BACKGROUND OF THE PRESENT DEADLOCK

<i>Chapter I.</i> India Today	<i>Page</i> 9
II. How Is India Governed?	14
III. The National Congress and the Moslem League	22
IV. Congress and British Foreign Policy	25
V. India Is Declared a Belligerent. Congress Issues a Statement and Enquiry	32
VI. The Viceroy's Answer	43

## PART II

### PROBLEMS OF SELF-GOVERNMENT IN INDIA

I. The Moslems	50
II. The Princes	62
III. The Other Minorities	74
IV. The Punjab: Bengal: the Marathas	80
V. Is India Fit for Self-Government?	84
VI. Can Britain and India Co-operate?	93

## PART III

## THE LINES OF A SOLUTION

<i>Chapter</i> I. The Cards which Congress Holds	<i>Page</i> 95
II. What Does India Want?	99
III. Can We Retrieve a Lost Chance?	104
IV. What Should Be Done Now?	113
V. Postscript. The Viceroy's Latest Offer	117

PART ONE

THE BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I

INDIA TODAY

IF THIS WAR were being fought in 1890, the man in the street, the ordinary English-speaking citizen of the Empire, could perhaps continue to regard India as a complicated and distasteful but (thank God!) distant problem, which was fortunately in the hands of trained officials competent to handle it. He could leave the incomprehensible East alone and get on with the war in the West.

But this is 1940.

We take the tightening-up of world communications for granted. We know that the old 'time-lag' which eased the speed of the travel of news from one country to another has utterly disappeared: that airways can carry men and mail in a few days to countries that only a few years ago were months apart. We know that, quite apart from improved literacy and means of getting information from the written word (cheaper books and more widely-distributed newspapers), the whole world now has the film and the radio and the opportunities they give for the distribution of information—and misinformation.

We accept the intense industrial modernisation of (Eastern) Japan and are inclined to regard her as a more formidable partner of Hitler's Axis than (Western) Italy. We have heard with sympathy of the slower, more patient modernisation of China—its grasp of modern methods as applied to agriculture, its adoption of the more gracious aspects of our cities and universities.

But how much do we know of Modern India?

Is India still a distasteful problem to us? Do we still instinctively turn away from it? If we do, are not *we*, in this case, the *Guilty Men*? If there is no large body of informed opinion to encourage intelligent forward moves on our Government's part, to check retrograde movements, are not *we*—the ordinary men and women of the Empire—to blame?

Either this war is a war for freedom—either the Empire is indivisible—its central islands, its Dominions, its colonies, rallying to a war of free peoples against a powerful—and hitherto successful—destroyer of freedom—or it is a thing of shreds and patches—bright shreds, dark patches.

Why should we not integrate the whole? Why should not the call that has integrated the rest of the Empire bring in India—an India divided between two honest loyalties—her passionate loyalty to the cause of world freedom that is now threatened by the dictators, and her steadfast loyalty to the ideal of her own freedom? Why can we not say to India, "Be one of us! And free"?

We are not at liberty to say this merely because the words sound like words we should like to say. We can only say this if we are prepared to implement the promise of freedom.

Can we do this? Is it wise or possible? What sort of freedom do we mean? When can it be given? Can we, who are ordinary people with little power, have any opinions worth having on this question?

We must have, unless Democracy is an open and discovered sham. Our Parliament is the ultimate source of power and appeal in all that affects India. We elect that Parliament. In that case, if Democracy is to be allowed to rule empires, we must be intelligent about India Today.

Many questions that have been in abeyance for centuries, or at any rate not ripe for the settling—questions of the first importance for the future of mankind—are being asked by the Time-Spirit now, and *he will have an answer*. One question is this: Can Democracy and 'Empire'

co-exist? Another is: Must East and West always live apart?

I have been reading a book by a lady traveller recently returned from India. It is of a type that has flourished long and steadily, but should now, surely, die.

It is a bird's-eye view—the view of a gay bird, flitting from one Government House to another and from one Prince's guesthouse to another, skimming over the lovely Indian landscape, listening to what The Best People in India are saying about India Today. One sentence put the whole book into immediate focus. In it the writer prettily expressed surprise at the mechanical skill of her Indian chauffeur. She told us that even in the Ancient East one could find men who knew how to handle cars!

I was reminded of a lecture on China given by an American fellow-traveller on shipboard some ten years ago. The main point of the 'lecture' (given in a beautiful scarlet kimono) was that, though you would never think it, there were some very large shops in Shanghai. "Big stores, quite like those in America!"

Wake up, Westerners!

In India hundreds of thousands can manipulate machinery. In India is an immense reserve of men who would make good pilots, as already they make excellent car drivers. Indians are naturally better at flying than the Japanese, who have an anti-flying idiosyncrasy which in spite of their bravery makes them second-rate pilots. In India (though I am not one of those who rejoice in this) industries are being developed in all parts of the country. Millions travel, not only by train but by country motor buses. From India many thousands have travelled to Europe and America, have taken university degrees or special technical training courses, and have either returned to India to business or the professions or have remained to practise in the professions of foreign lands. In India are scientists, artists, writers known wherever there are people who care for civilisation, and many more who should be known better than they are. Many Indians have the

latest European books and periodicals, not only in English but in French and German. These men and women are conversant with modern art, painting, ballet. They get at the present time a wide range and variety of radio news from many countries.

I happened to visit India last October, at a time of extreme tension. The Viceroy had replied to the manifesto of the Congress Working Committee and Congress had withdrawn its Ministries, sullen and humiliated.

I was invited to meet the Congress Working Committee, the day after the decision to withdraw the Ministries. We sat in Eastern fashion on low cushions, our shoes of course outside; only one of us, the Moslem who is now President of the Congress, sat on a chair. All this was 'Oriental', in the word's conventional sense.

But their first question set me straight back in my own world. It ignored the stormy waters of controversy, and concerned—not world politics, not Indian politics, but—the kind of English used by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

His Grace was reported to have said that "*on the whole* Congress" during its term of office "had not been *unduly* unfair to the minorities". These 'Orientals' alleged that this remark shed a floodlight on what they were pleased to consider the English ecclesiastical mind. "Does this mean that the English think *unfairness* right and ethical—so long as it does not become *undue* unfairness?"

What could an Englishman answer? I took refuge in the Common Law, by which no man can be held responsible for any nonsense except his own. They dismissed this as evasion.

So I pointed out, first, that the Head of the Church of England is a Scot and therefore could not be expected to understand the meaning of English words. (I have an inherited esteem for all Scots and deep interest in their ways—my ancestors lived in Cumberland, the county which for centuries had the job of keeping Scotland in order.) I explained further that no doubt His Grace was thinking in his own inherited fashion, along the lines of

the Anglican attitude towards Nonconformists (being a Nonconformist, I knew all about this too), and his mind had been functioning back in the Tudor era. A sensitive speaker responds to his audience; and His Grace was addressing the House of Lords.

Finally, I referred the Working Committee to *The Oxford History of India*, which observes that after the storm of Bharatpur (January, 1826), "The glory of the achievement was dimmed by the excessive rapacity for prize-money displayed by Lord Combermere" (the Commander-in-Chief; I pointed out that he was a Welshman): i.e. Rapacity is right and normal in a Commander-in-Chief, but should not be 'excessive'.

The Court grudgingly allowed 'the English' a clean bill, for this time only, and we got down to other business.

How many such gatherings could be collected in Britain—of men so conversant with the language of another country that they could take a native of that country to task for idiomatic misuse of it? Men who, confronted with a crisis in their land's history, could meet it with such abundance of good humour and absence of resentment against another country which they well knew did not understand them, never had understood them, and would never take the trouble to understand them?

All over India there are such groups of civilised interesting men and women of the world. You get superb talk in India, but the best of it is when you are with the best Indians, for their minds traffic in two oceans, the thought of both East and West.

And in the villages? In the villages and the poorer quarters of the large cities of India there are millions of men and women who see modern films and news reels. And there are villages where men and women hear the radio—often a communal wireless set in the centre of the village, but still—a radio.

English villages are full of folk to whom the wireless is a godsend. Walk down any village street on a summer evening when the windows are open and the six o'clock



news is on. You get the impression of brushing the surface of a great organism as complicated as the human body. There, behind those thin walls of brick, are the delicate capillaries of a blood-stream that pulses not only through a nation but through an Empire or, rather, through a world.

And, though as yet sluggishly, that blood-stream courses through India, too. India is a part of this modern world, of our Modern Empire. Bring her in more fully, as she longs to be brought in, to the full stream of the world's life.

## CHAPTER II

### HOW IS INDIA GOVERNED?

**B**RITISH INDIA is about 860,000 square miles in area, and Native India, which the Princes rule, 711,000. At the next Census (1941) it will probably be found that British India contains about 285 million people or even more, and Native India 90 million.

British India is divided into eleven Provinces, and a few oddments that are small special areas. Native India is divided up into very large, medium-sized, and small, sometimes very small, States. The British India and the Other India bits of all shapes and sizes fit in and out of the gigantic patchwork that forms the map of India.

British India, by the Government of India Act (1935), now has a Central Parliament with two Chambers, the Council of State and the Assembly. The Central Government has New Delhi for its winter seat and Simla for its summer one.

Each of the eleven Provinces was last October under a Governor and a Ministry whose Members were all Indians responsible to elected Legislatures (six have two chambers). These Provinces enjoyed self-government as regards those subjects relegated to the Provinces. The Punjab, Bengal,

and Sind still function in this manner. But the North-West Frontier Province, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar, Assam, Orissa, Madras, Bombay are now all of them back under autocratic rule and are run by the Governors and officials of the Indian Civil Service. These are the eight Provinces where Congress withdrew its Ministries.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF INDIAN SELF-GOVERNMENT

We may distinguish seven stages in the last hundred years:

1. A century ago, All India was under a Governor-General whose seat was Calcutta. Until 1834 he had a Council of three Members to assist him. In that year the celebrated Thomas Babington Macaulay was sent out as the first Law Member. Macaulay was sent to help in legislation only, and had no right to be present when executive business was discussed.

In 1834, there were also two Provinces, or, as they were called, Presidencies: Madras and Bombay. They were under Governors and Councils. They had enjoyed powers of legislation, which in 1833 were taken away from them (but restored later, though not in the former fulness). The Governor-General's Council in 1834 legislated for All India.

In 1835, a third Province was added, under a Lieutenant-Governor: Agra or the North-Western Provinces,<sup>1</sup> which today is part of the United Provinces.

In 1833, every position under the East India Company was declared open to all, whatever their race or creed. The same declaration was repeated in Queen Victoria's Proclamation in 1858, which moved Miss Mayo to exclaim in her *Mother India*: "a bomb, indeed, to drop into caste-ridden, feud-filled, tyrant-crushed India!"

It would have been indeed a bomb if anyone had taken it seriously. Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India, twenty years

<sup>1</sup> This must not be confused with the modern North-West Frontier Province.

later in a confidential letter to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Cranbrook, wrote:

“We all know that these claims and expectations never can or will be fulfilled. We had the choice between prohibiting them<sup>1</sup> and cheating them, and we have chosen the least straightforward course. . . . I do not hesitate to say that both the Government of England and of India appear to me up to the present moment unable to answer satisfactorily the charge of having taken every means in their power of breaking to the heart the words of promise they have uttered to the ear”.

2. In 1853, the Law Member became a full Member of Council. The Governor-General, who had had a casting vote, was given a definite veto on his Council's decisions. Right up to the present day one principle has been kept in Indian affairs—that an absolute power should rest somewhere—at first in the Home Government, then in the Governor-General as that Government's representative in India.

Legislative Councils were set up accidentally, without any intention of doing this. In 1853, a definite Legislative Council at the Central Government began to grow up; six ‘Added Members’ were appointed to the Governor-General's Council, two being judges and four representing the four Provinces then existing (Bombay, Madras, the North-Western Provinces, and Bengal, which was now created a separate Province).

3. 1861 was a time of general overhauling; the Mutiny had recently ended.

The judges were dropped from the Governor-General's Council, and he was allowed to appoint up to another twelve added Members. Two Indians were nominated for the first time.

The former Added Members had got into bad ways. They had sometimes tried to ask questions about administration and executive policy, and even to criticise. This

<sup>1</sup> Indians.

was now forbidden. They must devote their attention to legislation.

Legislative arrangements continued chaotic. The Provinces had limited powers of legislation, but for some subjects must get previous consent from the Governor-General (who now becomes called also the Viceroy), who could veto their legislation as well as with his own Council legislate for the Provinces.

Only Madras, Bombay, and Bengal were allowed Legislative Councils.

The Provinces were gradually growing in number. Assam was put under a Chief Commissioner, 1874. The North-Western Provinces were united with Oudh, 1877, and received their modern name of the United Provinces. Other shufflings and reshufflings took place in 1905 and 1911.

The United Provinces received a Legislative Council in 1886, Burma and the Punjab received theirs in 1897. At various times small Executive Councils came into being, the Punjab receiving one in 1920, up to which time its Lieutenant-Governor was in sole charge of administration. There were so many changes that I cannot note them all. The point is, some Provinces, notably the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras, have a much longer tradition of some degree of independence, whereas the Punjab has slowly and unwillingly come over to the idea of representative government. These facts are not without importance.

4. In 1892 came Lord Cross's *Indian Councils Act*. This added a few more Members, and the Viceroy's Council might now contain as many as sixteen Additional Members. The Provinces too had their own tiny Councils, and here there was a jump to twenty Additional Members, of whom eleven were to be non-officials. "The elective principle now cautiously raised its head".<sup>1</sup> Municipalities, University Senates, commercial organisations, were allowed to nominate members. Members were allowed the right of

<sup>1</sup> My own, "*The Reconstruction of India*, p. 50. As this book is out of print, I have borrowed from it for this chapter.

'interpellation'; that is, they might ask the Executive Councillors questions about acts of the Administration. But their work was not administration, it was legislation.

5. *The Morley-Minto Reforms*, 1909. The Central Legislative Assembly was enlarged from twenty-one to sixty. The Provincial Councils were doubled.

The 'communal' principle was introduced. Certain minorities, notably the Moslems, were reserved a certain definite representation.

These Reforms were hailed by Indians with delight. They are a very patient race. In their own legends it is quite usual for a god or even a human hero to wait for a thousand years.

6. In 1921, *the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms* came into operation.

The Provincial Legislative Councils were again enlarged, and in some of them officials were now in a minority. The Imperial Government was given a second chamber, the Council of State (sixty Members, of which thirty-three were elected).

The franchise embraced about three per cent of the total Indian population. The most important feature of these Reforms was 'dyarchy', division of rule. Certain subjects were transferred to the Provincial Legislative Councils and were put under Indian Ministers responsible to these Councils.

There are many objections to dyarchy, and it is rarely given a good word. It was defended as an attempt to train Indians by degrees for full self-government later, and although as a result of India's help in the War much more had been expected the Reforms would not have worked so badly if it had not been for the Jalianwalabagh massacre, of April, 1919, when General Dyer shot down close on 2,000 people (379 dead and about 1,200 wounded were the official figures) in a few minutes. I am not going to enter on this controversy here, beyond remarking that for Indian opinion this incident and the way it was received by influential bodies of British opinion have divided

British-Indian history into two epochs as distinctly as the Mutiny has divided it for us. General Dyer's action was condemned by both the Indian and Home Governments, and by the highest military authority. Unfortunately, his admirers in India and Britain presented him with a sword of honour and £26,000, and the House of Lords exonerated him; and in both Houses of Parliament were debates in which many members clearly expressed their view that Indian lives counted for far less than British lives.

All this made the worst possible beginning for the new Constitution.

Dyarchy was for the Provinces only. It did not affect the Central Government, which since 1911 had been in Delhi. This Government could still overrule all other Governments, even in the transferred subjects.

Dyarchy did better than is generally admitted. But the National Congress, the most powerful political party in the country, refused to co-operate, and was joined by the majority of the Moslems, who had their own additional cause for anger, in the post-war treatment of Turkey, a Moslem country.

7. *The Government of India Act, 1935.*

This was the result of the Round Table Conferences. There was to be a Federation, into which the Princes agreed to enter, nominating their representatives to the Central Legislature. This Legislature was to have, as before, two Chambers: the Council of State with 260 seats (104 for the Princes) and the Assembly with 375 seats (125 for the Princes). There were to be eleven Provinces (Burma being separated from India), with Cabinets of Indian Ministers.

The Viceroy still kept his own Executive Council, now consisting of himself, the Commander-in-Chief, three other British Members, and two Indian Members. (This Council is often called a Cabinet, but this is incorrect.) Four departments—Defence, Foreign Affairs, Ecclesiastical Affairs, and Excluded Areas (small pockets of separately

administrated territory scattered over India)—were under the Viceroy alone. Relations with the Princes remained with the Viceroy.

The whole scheme is riddled from top to bottom with 'safeguards', some of them in the Viceroy's hands, some in those of the Secretary of State in London (who kept the sole power of appointment to the Police and Civil Service), and the Central Legislative Chambers are so composed that whatever else may be heard there it will not be the voice of the people. It is so difficult to keep patience while considering it—if you have any sense of fairness—that I will dismiss a distasteful subject with the words of Professor Berriedale Keith:<sup>1</sup>

"For the federal scheme it is difficult to feel any satisfaction. The units of which it is composed are too disparate to be joined suitably together, and it is too obvious that on the British side the scheme is favoured in order to provide an element of pure conservatism in order to combat any dangerous elements of democracy contributed by British India. On the side of the rulers<sup>2</sup> it is patent that their essential preoccupation is with the effort to secure immunity from pressure in regard to the improvement of the internal administration of their states. Particularly unsatisfactory is the effort made to obtain a definition of paramountcy which would acknowledge the right of the ruler to misgovern his state, assured of British support to put down any resistance to his régime. It is difficult to deny the justice of the contention in India that federation was largely evoked by the desire to evade the issue of extending responsible government to the central government of British India. Moreover, the withholding of defence and external affairs from federal control, inevitable as the course is, renders the alleged concession of responsibility all but meaningless."

<sup>1</sup> *A Constitutional History of India*, p. 474.

<sup>2</sup> The Princes.

The Princes have not yet come in, so Federation has been postponed.

What did India gain from the Round Table Conferences and the Government of India Act?

This, chiefly: that the principle of majority rule (subject to 'weightage' or representation in excess of a minority's numerical proportion) was accepted. That principle is now being challenged and is in danger of being lost.

They gained also self-government—inside a limited sphere and with great stringency of funds—in the Provinces.

In the last stages (1933) of the Joint Select Committee (as the final sessions of the Round Table Conference were styled) a Joint Memorandum of over a hundred points was put up, covering concessions and changes which would make the Committee's coming decisions acceptable to Indian opinion. This Memorandum was signed by all the Indian groups, not merely the Liberals or Moderates, but by the Moslems' and Untouchables' representatives and by Sir Hubert Carr, who was the leader of the European business men, and by Sir Henry Gidney, who represented the Anglo-Indian or 'domiciled'—largely Eurasian—community. The memorandum was brushed aside entirely.

The Round Table Conference left bitterness and small sense of obligation for the new Constitution. Congress contested the elections in 1937, and won them, with absolute majorities in six Provinces (which became seven when a non-Congress group joined Congress in another) and as the largest single party in two more Provinces. For some months they refused to form Ministries, and 'caretaker' Ministries conducted a phantom unhappy existence. After negotiation concerning the Governors' use of their powers of veto, eight Congress Ministries were formed.

These were the Ministries that resigned last October.



## CHAPTER III

THE NATIONAL CONGRESS AND  
THE MOSLEM LEAGUE

THE INDIAN NATIONAL Congress was founded in 1885, largely by the efforts of some sympathetic British officials (with considerable encouragement from the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin) who thought that there should be some sounding-board for enlightened Indian opinion, some means by which that opinion could express itself.

The Moslem (or Muslim) League was founded in 1906, twenty years later, when the first considerable step forward towards self-government (that afterwards known as *The Morley-Minto Reforms*) was being discussed behind the scenes. This discussion was no secret; in India everything is known (including a good deal that does not exist)—it was an Eastern book, which once had considerable vogue, that reminds us that whatever you say in private will be talked over that same evening by the women on their flat housetops.

Congress membership is obtained by an annual payment of four annas (sixpence). The Moslem League now has a membership based on a two annas payment. The Congress membership is about four-and-a-half millions; the Moslem League strength does not seem to be published. Both these bodies have had large recent accessions, a reflection of the universal desire to "get on to the band-wagon". Many whose political interest had not been very noticeable hastened to join the Congress when it won its overwhelming victories three years ago. Membership was clearly the way to ministerial office.

This zest to get on the band-wagon has had its funny side. In the old days, applicants for jobs used to send chits that proved their utter 'loyalty', even sycophancy. When Congress became H.M. Government, chits came

in showing that the petitioner had been for years thoroughly unsound from the former Government point of view—had been in prison or *ought* to have been in prison. Often the man who had sent in the former kind of certificate forgot this and sent in the kind he supposed was now in favour; and the Congress Minister concerned found a grim pleasure in comparing both sorts side by side in the same dossier.

Mr. Gandhi's recent efforts have been largely devoted to shaking off these new enthusiasts and trying to get down to basic strength, in case he has to launch Civil Disobedience again (that strategist Gideon, it will be remembered, similarly shed all but a handful of completely trustworthy followers, on the eve of his battle with the hosts of Midian).

The Moslem League has gained in the same fashion as Congress, since it became the Government practice to treat its President, Mr. Jinnah, as a kind of Moslem Mahatma. It is convenient to fine essential discussion down to two or three 'key' men. There are, nevertheless, strong Moslem groups (as we shall see) who reject Mr. Jinnah's leadership, just as Congress (often assumed to be synonymous with Hinduism) in recent days is opposed by the Hindu Mahasabha with even more bitterness than the Moslem League. The Congress leaders are considered to be bad Hindus, as some of them certainly are.

Leadership filters down through groups of varying size, but is concentrated at the top in what is styled a 'Working Committee', often referred to as 'the Higher Command' (of Congress or Moslem League). Other groups besides Congress and the Moslem League have these Working Committees. The Congress Working Committee consists of a dozen to perhaps a dozen and a half members; the Moslem League's Working Committee is rather smaller. The Working Committee is chosen by the President, as the British Cabinet by the Prime Minister.

The annual meetings of Congress have been held in important cities all over India, to familiarise Indians

with its work. These meetings used to be held in Christmas week or the week following, but latterly have been held earlier or later in the cold weather.

Emergency meetings of Moslem or Congress Working Committees are often held in Delhi, since this is only a few miles away from New Delhi, the seat of the Central Government, which is very likely in negotiation with these bodies. But many Congress Working Committee meetings have been at Wardha, which is almost exactly in the centre of India and close to Mr. Gandhi's home at Segaon.

Mr. Gandhi is not a Member of the Congress Working Committee, he is not even a four-anna member of Congress. He is one of the world's very few hundred-per-cent pacifists (only one member of the Working Committee is this) and he resigned because he did not feel that the Congress atmosphere was really hundred-per-cent 'non-violent'. But it does not in the least matter what Mr. Gandhi calls himself. He has co-opted himself a life member of all Congress gatherings, and when his inner voice tells him he should be present he is present.

At the provincial elections (1937) these parties emerged with the following strength:

<i>Province</i>	<i>Moslem League</i>	<i>Other Moslem reserved seats</i>	<i>Congress</i>
Madras . . .	11	17	159
Bombay . . .	20	9	88
Bengal . . .	40	77	50
United Provinces . . .	27	37	134
Punjab . . .	1	83	18
Bihar . . .	<i>nil</i>	39	98
Central Provinces . . .	<i>nil</i>	14	71
Assam . . .	9	25	35
N.W. Frontier Prov. . .	<i>nil</i>	36	19
Orissa . . .	<i>nil</i>	4	36
Sind . . .	<i>nil</i>	36	7
<i>Totals . . .</i>	<i>108</i>	<i>377</i>	<i>715</i>

Other categories bring the total of all seats in these Legislatures up to 1585. It must be remembered that only 657 were 'general seats', open without reservation to all parties. India's electoral arrangements make her Parliaments rather resemble a series of Mappin Terraces, where each species has its assigned habitat.

Both Congress and Moslem League gained some strength by post-election accessions, when the work of Cabinet-making was in progress. These made them the largest single parties in Bengal and the N.W.F.P. respectively, where a Coalition Government under a Moslem League (ex-Congress) Premier and a Moslem Congress Government were formed.

Mr. Jinnah's first and most stressed demand before there can be a settlement is that the Moslem League shall be recognised, not by Government only but also by Congress, as speaking for all Moslems. This demand Congress refuses, on two grounds: (1) that it would throw over not only the Moslems who are in the Congress but other groups which are often in friendly alignment with it; (2) that it would accept the label which it has steadily refused, of being a Hindu body. The Mahasabha, not Congress, is the Hindu sectional organisation.

#### CHAPTER IV

### CONGRESS AND BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

WHEN THE FIRST seven Congress Ministries were formed, if Congress had been willing to form Coalition Governments (one was formed later in Assam) two Provinces, Sind and Bengal, which are now non-Congress, would also have been Congress Provinces. The present Moslem Premier of Bengal was then a Congressman and was willing to serve in a Congress Ministry. In Sind the Moslem League had been routed and was in opposition,

and the Ministry was a Moslem Ministry on friendly terms with the Congress Members of the Legislature; at the annual celebration last January of what is styled Independence Day, the Moslem Premier of Sind led the Congress procession.

We have known, since the Khaki Election of the Boer War, some sweeping electoral victories in Britain. But no British political party has ever approached the success of the Congress in the Indian elections, despite the system by which numerous minority groups, racial or religious, have seats reserved for them alone.

Even when we formed our first National Government in Britain, in 1931, there were groups who were not sure that it quite represented their feelings and opinions. But we always insist on 100 per cent unanimity in India. If you sweep the horizon with field glasses you can always find *some* dissidents somewhere—the last Secretary of State, for example, when he printed last autumn the Congress manifesto as a white paper managed to find a statement by Indians who disagreed with it—and a very interesting catch he made! It is queer that we—who have perhaps more individuals and even eccentrics than any other nation—seem to think there ought not to be any in India!

The answer to the question, Why did Congress pull out its Ministries? is to be found in India's profound dislike and distrust of our foreign policy over a period of years. On this point, at any rate, Congress spoke for India.

Do you think the Moslems liked what happened in Abyssinia or Albania? Or the stress laid in some British circles on the Catholic and Christian character of the aggressors in Abyssinia and Spain? Even now, our spokesmen talk far too much and unwisely about the present war being a Christian Crusade. It is something greater and nobler than the Crusades ever were.

Ever since Japan began the aggression business, at its annual meetings Congress has passed resolutions of

increasing stringency deploring our foreign policy, pointing out its perils, and affirming India's refusal to be involved in war without her consent.

The wording of these resolutions carried the sign-manual of the vigorous internationalism and sturdy ethical principles of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, whose *Autobiography* has made him hardly less famous in the outside world than Gandhi himself. His views were practically indistinguishable from those held and trenchantly expressed by our own Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill, by many Conservatives in this country, and by most of the Liberal and Labour Parties.

These years of deepening disaster, to many of us of all political parties, have seemed to be no mystery as they were passing; it has been like reading off a blackboard or (to change the metaphor, to one used to me by Alexander Korda, six months before Munich) like waiting on a station for a collision and crash which you knew was certainly coming. If at any time during the past six years Mr. Winston Churchill, Mr. Franklin Roosevelt, and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had found themselves in the same room discussing foreign affairs and Britain's foreign policy, they would have found themselves in complete agreement. The Indian had this added misery, of knowing that his own country was throughout a tool and puppet—that she could do nothing except utter protests which no one heard, and that when the crash came she would be dragged along the line with it.

Here are a few quotations:

“This Congress sends its warmest greetings to the people of China and its assurances of full sympathy with them in their fight for emancipation and records its condemnation of the action of the Indian Government in refusing passports to the Medical Mission which the All India Congress Committee wanted to send to China. . . . The Congress declares that the people of India . . . desire to live at peace . . . and asserts their

right to determine whether or not they will take part in any war". (December, 1927).

"Since the last session of the Congress the crisis has deepened and Fascist aggression has increased, the Fascist Powers forming alliances and grouping themselves together for war with the intention of dominating Europe and the world and crushing political and social freedom. The Congress is fully conscious of the necessity of facing this world menace in co-operation with the progressive nations and peoples of the world, and especially with those peoples who are dominated over and exploited by Imperialism and Fascism. In the event of such a world war taking place there is grave danger of Indian man-power and resources being utilised for the purposes of British Imperialism, and it is therefore necessary for the Congress to warn the country again against this and prepare it to resist such exploitation of India and her people. No credits must be voted for such a war and voluntary subscriptions and war loans must not be supported and all other war preparations resisted". (December, 1936).

"Fascist aggression has increased and unabashed defiance of international obligations has become the avowed policy of Fascist Powers. British foreign policy, in spite of its evasions and indecisions, has consistently supported the Fascist Powers in Germany, Spain and the Far East, and must therefore largely shoulder the responsibility for the progressive deterioration of the world situation. That policy still seeks an arrangement with Nazi Germany and has developed closer relations with Rebel Spain. It is helping in the drift to imperialist war.

"India can be no party to such an imperialist war and will not permit her man-power and resources to be exploited in the interests of British Imperialism. Nor can India join any war without the express consent of her people". (February, 1938).

## MUNICH: AND AFTER

India's destiny and her relations with Britain seem to have been handed over by Providence to Harrovians: Lord Baldwin, Lord Zetland, Sir Samuel Hoare, Mr. Winston Churchill, Mr. L. S. Amery, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. They fall neatly into two groups, of appeasers and anti-Fascists.

Nehru keeps, with half-rueful amusement, his photograph in O.T.C. uniform, and he likes Byron's poetry much better than he should, because (he admits the reason) Byron was at Harrow, where after the first bleakness which we all experience at a public school Nehru was happy and liked. In the National Congress they twit him with his 'Anglo-Saxon' ways. When I entered the room where the Working Committee were, last October, Rajagopalachari, the Madras Premier, responded to my greeting with an outstretched hand, and then apologised. "It is his Anglo-Saxonism" (with a wave towards Jawaharlal) "that gets us into these bad ways." It is usual to say that Nehru thinks "like an Englishman." "Talk that over with Jawaharlal," said Gandhi to me, some years ago. "He thinks like your people." This does not prevent his being as strong a patriot as you can find anywhere. Too much stress is laid on his "Englishness".

At any rate, during the pre-Munich crisis he wrote all like an Englishman. He was in Prague through much of that summer when Lord Runciman was helping the Czechs to settle their troubles and wrote me letters of which not one comma needs to be changed today. Since his judgments went back to India and spread far through his own people, I am going to show how he thought and felt:

"Czechoslovakia is not a place to cheer one up just at present. I have just returned from the Sudeten German areas. It was a profitable visit and I learnt much. The majority of the Henleinites are past reason and live  
Cf



in an emotional state of exaltation expecting the millennium, in the shape of Hitler, to come at any moment and unloose their hands to take vengeance on their opponents. I believe careful records and even pictures of many of their local opponents are kept for the purpose. A minority of Henlein's party is in it through sheer terror. After the collapse of Austria it seemed that the fate of Czechoslovakia was sealed and it was natural for them to take refuge in Henlein's party. Apart from this the principal reason for the growth of Henlein's party has been the collapse of the glass industry, throwing large numbers into unemployment.

"The German Social Democrats in the Sudeten areas are depressed but are bearing up fairly well. They know well the fate in store for them if Hitler comes. The Czechs are behaving well, though occasionally perhaps a little chauvinistically. Long years of suppression and the past months of continued insult and aggression from across the frontiers have put their backs up, and they have come to the conclusion that they will have to fight for their existence. They keep in readiness for this and believe that they can give a good account of themselves, though they have no illusions about the power of their opponents and the terrible nature of this strength. Having come to this conclusion they are singularly calm and ready for all eventualities. . . .<sup>1</sup>

"But something that has astounded me enormously is the attitude of our 100 per cent pacifists. . . . I find it nauseating that——<sup>2</sup> should go backwards and forwards . . . and do all the dirty work of Hitler—and all in the sacred name of peace. Why does he not transfer his energies to the Trentino where Germans are really being oppressed by Mussolini?

"What a tremendous responsibility the British Government has to shoulder today, for ultimately it is its policy that will lead to peace or war in Central Europe!

<sup>1</sup> I omit a close analysis of Lord Runciman's activities.

<sup>2</sup> Name omitted.

And that policy is leading to war today!" (August 15, 1938).

This is how he felt when he left Europe:

"I am on my way to India, and as I go I see that Lindsay has been defeated. . . .<sup>1</sup> One expected that end, yet I did not think the majority would be quite so big. Personally I think that the reaction from all this madness will come soon. But where is the leader for this? I do not see him anywhere in England". (October 29, 1938).

We can guess how Nehru felt after Munich, and how India felt. At the next annual meeting, at Tripuri (March, 1939), as simultaneously Hitler seized Czechoslovakia and Mr. Chamberlain gave our pledge to Poland, Congress couched its annual warning in terms of desperation:

"The Congress records its entire disapproval of British Foreign Policy culminating in the Munich Pact, the Anglo-Italian Agreement and the recognition of Rebel Spain. This policy has been one of deliberate betrayal of democracy, repeated breach of pledges, the ending of the system of collective security, and co-operation with governments which are avowed enemies of democracy and freedom. As a result of this policy, the world is being reduced to a state of international anarchy where brute violence triumphs and flourishes unchecked, and in the name of peace stupendous preparations are being made for the most terrible wars. International morality has sunk so low in Central and South-western Europe that the world has witnessed with horror the organised terrorism of the Nazi Government against people of the Jewish race and the continuous bombing from the air by rebel forces of cities and civilian inhabitants and helpless refugees.

<sup>1</sup> The Oxford bye-election, the first after Munich.

“The Congress dissociates itself entirely from British Foreign Policy which has consistently aided the Fascist Powers and helped in the destruction of democratic countries. The Congress is opposed to Imperialism and Fascism alike and is convinced that world peace and progress require the ending of both of these. In the opinion of the Congress, it is urgently necessary for India to direct her own foreign policy as an independent nation, thereby keeping aloof from both Imperialism and Fascism, and pursuing her path of peace and freedom.”

## CHAPTER V

### INDIA IS DECLARED A BELLIGERENT. CONGRESS ISSUES A STATEMENT AND ENQUIRY

THE REST FOLLOWED automatically.

In the summer an Amending Act to the Government of India Act pulled back into the Viceroy's hands in case of war the very considerable powers of self-government enjoyed by the eleven Provinces, “the very Constitution which brings the Provincial Assemblies into existence”, thereby underlining

“the very subordinate position which the liberties of the Indian people occupy in the counsels of Britain and the ease and facility with which those liberties can be touched and frustrated, while whenever there is a question of enlarging them all imaginable difficulties and obstacles are put forward”.<sup>1</sup>

The British Parliament meant no special insult; it was preoccupied with other affairs and hardly noticed what it had done.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Purushottamdas Tandon, Speaker in the United Provinces Assembly, October 1, 1939.

In September, India was declared a belligerent, without the formality of consulting either her Central Assembly or the Provincial Assemblies. Eire, Britain's closest neighbour, stayed neutral: South Africa hesitated: Iraq, Egypt, the Indian Princes, spoke for themselves.

"How very galling it is to us that we should not have any say even in those matters of vital importance which are of intimate concern to everyone amongst us. We are asked to fight, not because we choose to fight but because England wants us to fight. Small colonies which started life only yesterday and which have hardly two or three per cent of our population are free to make their own choice for peace or for war. It is open to Eire to remain neutral if it so chooses. It is open to the Union of South Africa to keep aloof if it so chooses. As you are doubtless aware, the Prime Minister of that state, General Hertzog, was defeated by only a small majority when he sponsored a resolution for neutrality in war. Canada and Australia have decided for themselves. They were consulted at every stage in the course of the present crisis. . . . None of the provincial governments was ever shown the courtesy of being consulted in this matter or in any matters pertaining to the war. Even that nominally representative body, the Central Assembly, was not consulted. Is our position no better than that of a vassal or of a serf or a galley slave, whose life is at the disposal of his master? He cannot say whether he will enter the lists or not. He must when he is asked to. . . . Mr. Chamberlain said that the new order would be based on mutual confidence and mutual trust. This is the trust that has been reposed in us."<sup>1</sup>

Since foreign policy, which of course includes the right of declaring war, was a reserved subject, in the Viceroy's hands, this action was technically correct and legal, by

<sup>1</sup> Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Premier of the United Provinces, October 27, 1939.

the Constitution Britain had bestowed on India. But whenever there arises a conflict of legal with moral right, the latter will sweep the board. In the American Revolution this country had a case against the rebels (as historians now admit), but because the revolutionaries focused the quarrel on their claim that "taxation without representation is tyranny" our own conscience and the judgment of the world and historians gave the case against us.

The National Congress focused their quarrel on the claim that no country has the right to commit another to a war without its consent. "India," a distinguished soldier said to me, "has a strong moral case". He added, however, with emphasis in his tones, "*No one* is going to ask India to suffer *any* casualties".

You see, last autumn it was 'a phoney war'; all we had to do was to enforce as much blockade as we could and make cheerful speeches and Germany would crack from within.

The Congress Working Committee had appointed a War Emergency Committee of three,<sup>1</sup> who drew up a manifesto which was sent out, September 14, asking what were the British Government's war aims and if the war were really one for freedom and democracy and how these aims would be applied to India. As this document is destined to take a permanent place in the literature of freedom, I make no apology for giving it nearly all. It deals with much more than the immediate issues.

"The Working Committee have given their earnest consideration to the grave crisis that has developed owing to the declaration of war in Europe. The principles which should guide the nation in the event of war have been repeatedly laid down by the Congress, and only a month ago this Committee reiterated them and expressed their displeasure at the flouting of Indian opinion by the British Government in India. As a first step to dissociate

<sup>1</sup> Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sardar Vallabhai Patel.

themselves from this policy of the British Government, the Committee called upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the next session. Since then the British Government have declared India as a belligerent country, promulgated Ordinances, passed the Government of India Act Amending Bill, and taken other far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally, and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the provincial governments. This has been done without the consent of the Indian people whose declared wishes in such matters have been deliberately ignored by the British Government. The Working Committee must take the gravest view of these developments.

"The Congress has repeatedly declared its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. It . . . must therefore unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathise with those who resist it.

"The Congress has further laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people, and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for Imperialist ends. Any imposed decision, or attempt to use India's resources for purposes not approved by them, will necessarily have to be opposed by them. If co-operation is desired in a worthy cause this cannot be obtained by compulsion and imposition, and the Committee cannot agree to the carrying out by the Indian people of orders issued by external authority. Co-operation must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy. . . . But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her. . . .

“Again it is asserted that democracy is in danger and must be defended and with this statement the Committee are in entire agreement. The Committee believe that the peoples of the West are moved by this ideal and objective and for these they are prepared to make sacrifices. But again and again the ideals and sentiments of the people and of those who have sacrificed themselves in the struggle have been ignored and faith has not been kept.

“If the War is to defend the ‘*status quo*’, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privilege, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. The Committee are convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy. But there is an inherent and ineradicable conflict between democracy for India or elsewhere and Imperialism and Fascism. If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference, and must guide their own policy. A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic co-operation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilising the world’s knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity.

“The crisis that has overtaken Europe is not of Europe only but of humanity and will not pass like other crises or wars leaving the essential structure of the present day world intact. It is likely to refashion the world for good or ill, politically, socially and economically. This crisis is the inevitable consequence of the social and political conflicts and contradictions which have grown alarmingly

since the last Great War, and it will not be finally resolved till these conflicts and contradictions are removed and a new equilibrium established. That equilibrium can only be based on the ending of the domination and exploitation of one country by another, and on a reorganisation of economic relations on a juster basis for the common good of all. India is the crux of the problem, for India has been the outstanding example of modern imperialism and no refashioning of the world can succeed which ignores this vital problem. With her vast resources she must play an important part in any scheme of world reorganisation. But she can only do so as a free nation whose energies have been released to work for this great end. Freedom today is indivisible and every attempt to retain imperialist domination in any part of the world will lead inevitably to fresh disaster.

“The Working Committee have noted that many Rulers of Indian States have offered their services and resources and expressed their desire to support the cause of democracy in Europe. If they must make their professions in favour of democracy abroad, the Committee would suggest that their first concern should be the introduction of democracy within their own States in which today undiluted autocracy reigns supreme. The British Government in India is more responsible for this autocracy than even the Rulers themselves, as has been made painfully evident during the past year. This policy is the very negation of democracy and of the new world order for which Great Britain claims to be fighting in Europe.

“As the Working Committee view past events in Europe, Africa and Asia, and more particularly past and present occurrences in India, they fail to find any attempt to advance the cause of democracy or self-determination or any evidence that the present war declarations of the British Government are being, or are going to be, acted upon. The true measure of democracy is the ending of Imperialism and Fascism alike



and the aggression that has accompanied them in the past and the present. Only on that basis can a new order be built up. In the struggle for that new world order, the Committee are eager and desirous to help in every way. But the Committee cannot associate themselves or offer any co-operation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere.

“In view, however, of the gravity of the occasion and the fact that the pace of events during the last few days has often been swifter than the working of men’s minds, the Committee desire to take no final decision at the stage, so as to allow for the full elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and in the future. But the decision cannot long be delayed as India is being committed from day to day to a policy to which she is not a party and of which she disapproves.

“The Working Committee therefore invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people? A clear declaration about the future, pledging the Government to the ending of Imperialism and Fascism alike, will be welcomed by the people of all countries, but it is far more important to give immediate effect to it, to the largest possible extent, for only this will convince the people that the declaration is meant to be honoured. The real test of any declaration is its application in the present, for it is the present that will govern action today and give shape to the future. . . .

“The Committee earnestly appeal to the Indian people to end all internal conflict and controversy and, in this grave hour of peril, to keep in readiness and hold

together as a united nation, calm of purpose and determined to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of the world”.

Next day (September 15, 1939) Mr. Gandhi issued his own separate comment, in course of which he said:

“The author of the statement is an artist. Though he cannot be surpassed in his implacable opposition to Imperialism in any shape or form, he is a friend of the English people. Indeed, he is more English than Indian in his thoughts and make-up. He is often more at home with Englishmen than with his own countrymen. And he is a humanitarian in the sense that he reacts to every wrong, no matter where perpetrated. Though, therefore, he is an ardent nationalist his nationalism is enriched by his fine internationalism. Hence the statement is a manifesto addressed not only to his own countrymen, but it is addressed also to the nations of the world, including those that are exploited like India. He has compelled India, through the Working Committee, to think not merely of her own freedom, but of the freedom of all the exploited nations of the world”.

Gandhi's testimony concerning Nehru—who in Britain is commonly supposed to be ‘a Red’ or ‘an Extremist’—is strictly accurate. He was, and is now, the man in India who is best informed and whose thought is most rigidly realist about all international affairs. The half playful charge against him in his own country is that he is too much of an internationalist and not enough of a nationalist. Not only was he in Prague through the Sudeten crisis; he spent much time in Barcelona and last October, when he had returned from a month in Chungking (which the Japanese bombed several times daily) as the Chinese Government's guest, brought by a plane spared from the few they possess, he remarked to me: “I think I know more about being bombed than anyone else in India,

British or Indian". One day it will be possible to tell of the quite extraordinary attempts made by both Mussolini and Hitler to win him over to co-operation with them. I am going to risk it, and to tell a small part of this story now. After five years in prison, in 1935 Nehru was released, to spend the last days with his dying wife. After she had died in Switzerland, in the spring of 1936 he returned to India by air. The Duce, whose previous overtures had been put by courteously—by a man who did not forget, and never will consent to forget, Abyssinia and the stifling of liberty in Italy itself—learnt that Nehru was on the plane and when it reached Rome an official of the Italian Foreign Office was waiting at the hotel, to tell Nehru that the Duce had set aside time to see him at 6 p.m. Nehru was polite and correct: expressed his sense of the honour: but flatly refused to accept the distinction. The official remained and argued. No one, he said, in any country in the world would turn down an offer such as this, from the Master of Italy—distinguished visitors from America and Europe intrigued and pressed to be allowed to speak with him, even just to look at him. He had put off a Cabinet meeting and he would be waiting. Of course Nehru must keep the appointment; it was nonsense to take this line! He himself could not afford to accept a refusal!

Nehru listened patiently, said his say quietly, and finally drew the official's attention to the fact that the minute hand of the clock was nearing 6 p.m. Was it wise to let the Duce in for disappointment? The official in a passion flew to the 'phone and poured out a torrent of terrified speech. Next morning Nehru, who a year earlier had been in the British prison where he had wasted the best years of his prime, went on his way to India.

How many Englishmen—how many Americans—would have stood out against what was offered as an outstanding distinction? If only from curiosity and to be able to say that Mussolini had asked us to see him, and to be able to report what he looked like and said, would we not have

blanketed down our convictions and conscience and gone to see him? It is only since June of this year that it has been quite the thing in Britain to say what we thought of the Duce,<sup>1</sup> with whom we had a gentleman's agreement.

The Duce bore no malice and for a great while refused to give up his hopes of the Indian National Congress and of Nehru in particular.

Nehru would be a happier man if he did not "react to every wrong, no matter where perpetrated". He is one of those of whom Keats writes:

‘ to whom the miseries of the world  
Are misery, and will not let them rest ’.

He does not consider any country "a far-off country of which we know nothing": he feels as personal suffering all the suffering now so abundant everywhere. He was wretched after a visit to the Rhondda Valley. "It has given me a new picture of your people. I always thought that, however poor, the English could not be crushed, that they kept their independence, that they were not like us. But I have seen men being roughly treated by the police, men broken and despairing". He has been watching the present war, in the hope that it would change from being "an imperialist war", into a "people's war", and that its end would be a nobler happier Britain and a happier India.

This is why up to date there has been no Civil Disobedience. If the crisis of last year had occurred six years ago, Civil Disobedience would have followed almost as one and the same event.

#### INDIA LAST AUTUMN

A complete fog of war had fallen between Britain and India when I arrived at Allahabad by air, October 13, 1939. For example, even Inglis, *The Times* Special

<sup>1</sup> *Punch* today (July 31, 1940) calls him 'the Arch-Mandrill', and a few weeks ago pictured him as a hyena—so far have we swiftly travelled from our enthusiastic admiration of yesterday!

Correspondent in New Delhi, had not seen on October 20 any copy of *The Times* later than the September 21 issue, whereas I had seen *The Times* and *The New Statesman* of October 7; the latter contained a provocative letter by Mr. Bernard Shaw, from which excerpts had been cabled.

I had, therefore, no difficulty in seeing anyone I wanted to see; people thought I might know something about the mysterious war in Europe. The radio was telling little. One night, for example: "It is semi-officially reported from Paris that what are described as far-reaching strategic plans are believed to have been discussed at the last meeting of the French Higher Command". Very satisfactory, to those who had hitherto supposed that what generals when they meet together commonly discuss is film stars and ballet-dancers!

But the fog seemed to go back even further. Two things in the Congress Working Committee's statement roused in British circles an amount of questioning that for some time I could not bring myself to believe was genuine. When did H.M. Government declare that it was in favour of the League of Nations? And *when* had we said we were fighting for 'democracy'?

In reply to the first question one was able to cite Sir Samuel Hoare's too-famous speech before the League Assembly, saying that the British Government stood, and always had stood, four-square for the fulfilment of the Covenant in all its entirety. "I clean forgot about Hoare's speech", admitted a Member of the Viceroy's Council. As to 'democracy', I could remember only that when I left England we seemed to be always hearing the word whenever Cabinet Ministers broadcast, but I could not quote verbatim. All I could say was: "Well, if we once let it be known that we are *not* fighting for democracy it is good-bye to all chance of help from America". "Then you think we ought to acquiesce in a falsehood—for the sake of getting American help!"

Nine months later (August, 1940) I am beginning to wonder which of us was right.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE VICEROY'S ANSWER

ONE THING THAT makes Indian affairs always a more or less permanent deadlock is what I must style racial segregation. Last October, not one European Member of the Viceroy's Council knew either Gandhi or Nehru, who are known to countless people in every civilised land. I could name many other high officials in the same case. A Governor who is both able and democratic in outlook told me: "I hate the fact that I must leave India without having met either Gandhi or Nehru. I admire them greatly".

As regards Gandhi, this is partly understandable. Gandhi (like the tiger) is royal game. Anyone under the Viceroy might justifiably fear that he was poaching if he met him, and no one would believe that a Governor's visit to Gandhi was mere social intercourse.

A somewhat similar line of defence might be put up as regards British officials and Indians. Now that the Provinces were self-governing, the ordinary official might feel that—on the analogy of British Cabinet Ministers and the King—he should be careful to leave Indian Ministers to talk only to the Governor to whom they were constitutionally responsible. There certainly is something in this, in a land so bureaucratically run as India.

But things are far worse than they ever were before, at any rate in my lifetime. The truth is, British officialdom now knows no one. Even so staunch a friend of ours as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru told me that social relations between British and Indians had never been less than they are now.

There was no Indian in the Viceroy's personal secretariat, although the personal secretariat of at least some Governors had been Indianised.

There is a difficulty inherent also—in a land where social precedence counts for so much—in the vast social gulf between Viceroys and their own servants. This has been felt ever since the time of Lord Wellesley, who wrote of himself (1803), “I stalk about like a Royal Tiger, without even a friendly jackal to soothe the severity of my thoughts”. A Viceroy is usually sent from the very highest, or next to the very highest, of British social and political circles.

The final touch of racial segregation is afforded by the Government’s composition, both in Whitehall and New Delhi. Last November the Secretary of State for India, the Permanent Under-Secretary, the Viceroy, the Commander-in-Chief, were all Scots: there was not a single Englishman or Welshman on the Viceroy’s Council: seven of the eleven Governors were Scots, and one an Ulster Scot: the leader of the Europeans in the Central Legislature and even *The Times* Correspondent at New Delhi were Scots. (The Governor of Burma also was of course a Scot).

This tradition goes a long way back. In the late eighteenth century Henry Dundas’s

“Indian and Scottish policies dovetailed very nicely into each other. He managed the Scottish vote at Westminster by the distribution of Government patronage among Scots. As a result, Scotland lost all control of its own destinies, but British India enjoyed this priceless boon of government by Scots”.<sup>1</sup>

The stock joke in the exhilarating controversial literature of that age was that unless your name was Campbell or began with Mac you had no hope of success in India.

All foreigners agree that the English are a stupid race. Yet I think they supply a certain elasticity, whereas the Scots seem to me the most obstinate devils on God’s earth. Not one inch will they budge, in battle or in politics, and I have seen them in both.

<sup>1</sup> D. C. Somervell, *The Observer*, September 10, 1933.

The Indian Civil Service is the world's most majestic and coherent trade union; and its tenacity, stiffened throughout its upper reaches by Scots, is like that of the Hindenburg Line. If an occasional Welshman or Englishman were appointed to a Governorship, there would no doubt be a loss of efficiency. But would it not be justifiable on other grounds? For one thing, when we complain that India under self-government would go in for nepotism and racial preferences in jobs and posts, is not the charge at present open to seemingly devastating answer?

#### THE PRESENT VICEROY

The Marquess of Linlithgow cannot be said to have bridged the gulf between the Ruler of India and other Europeans. It is the custom to say that His Excellency is 'inscrutable', and that no one knows his mind, "except perhaps Mr. Laithwaite" (his Private Secretary, whose position is often compared to that formerly credited to Sir Horace Wilson here; people speak of "the Linlithwaite Government").

But I am bound to say that his reputation with Indians was higher. They care nothing about social gifts, but a great deal about integrity. Mr. Gandhi said to me: "I have the highest opinion of his intellect and character. And he will promise nothing that he cannot perform. He is absolutely honest. Though, mind you, we have learnt that the honesty of Englishmen is of a very limited kind." Gandhi proceeded to give examples of officials who had admitted to him that they could not, consistently with their duty, be rigidly truthful. We all know that this is so, especially in the last few years; we have had a bad slump in honesty. The Viceroy's integrity, however, is of a striking kind. He has had a difficult job, not only with India but (one guesses) with Whitehall, and he has shown patience.

#### THE VICEROY'S STATEMENT

The Viceroy received the Congress Working Committee's statement and proceeded to interview leaders of every



kind and calibre, some of them important but others coming under the head of what Shelley calls 'the illustrious obscure'. He knew all this, naturally, but his sense of duty and fairness made him ready to take infinite trouble. He interviewed 52 persons in all, and issued his own statement, October 18.

Mr. Gandhi called the author of the Congress's statement 'an artist'. There has been some curiosity as to who was responsible for the document which answered it. This is how it is written:

"I am convinced myself, if I may say so with the utmost emphasis, that, having regard to the extent of agreement which in fact exists in the constitutional field, and on this most difficult and important question of the nature of the arrangements to be made for expediting and facilitating the attainment by India of her full status there is nothing to be gained by phrases which, widely and generally expressed, contemplate a state of things which is unlikely to stand at the present point of political development the test of practical application, or to result in that unified effort by all parties and all communities in India on the basis of which alone India can hope to go forward as one and to occupy the place to which her history and her destinies entitle her."

There are 136 words in that sentence, and the next sentence contains 88!

It would be cruel to criticise such composition; its breathlessness and lameness; its grotesque imagery, its confusion and mixture of thought. The statement left on readers the savage impression that its ambiguities were a deliberate smokescreen, under cover of which the author meant to get clean away from the point under discussion. In a way, it was a good thing it was so absurd and slovenly. It struck Indian opinion, after the first outburst of sheer exasperation, as very very funny, and the air was cleansed by happy laughter.

The statement contained two offers: (1) The British Government authorised the Viceroy to say that at the end of the war it would be "very willing to enter into consultations" with a number of people "with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in framing such modifications" in the Constitution "as may seem desirable". (2) As a war measure selected Indians were to be allowed to help in propagandising themselves. "A consultative group . . . over which the Governor-General himself will preside . . . would be summoned at his invitation and would have as its object the association of public opinion in India with the conduct of the war and with questions relating to war activities."

(1) was taken to envisage another Round Table Conference. The former Conference is a humiliating memory to Indians, who feel that in London they were shown at their worst, amid strange surroundings and all the opportunities of endless intrigue behind the scenes. As to (2), it was superfluous. "Indians are not fools," said an Indian official to me. "We know all about these consultative groups. I am in one, which has just wasted three days. We have decided to do nothing for three months, after which we are to meet again. These groups are attached to everything." A telegram can summon anyone from any part of India, and a Viceroy who interviews fifty-two people in succession has his consultative group already.

Nor was there any need to propagandise India. There was an almost passionate desire to help us if terms that preserved self-respect were granted. Mr. Gandhi had expressed himself as anxious to co-operate unconditionally. It was others, who were more troubled by the apparent 'imperialist' character of the war, who refused this. Nehru wrote to me: "we are not going to be caught in an unknown and dangerous adventure unless we know what the objective is and unless we can really control our policy. So long as we suspect that the aims of the war are imperialistic we shall keep far away

from it, and we shall thus serve not only ourselves but others who want to pull out this war from the old ruts." But Nehru also said:

"Some Congressmen tell you that it is not possible to make India enthusiastic on your side. But I know that they are wrong—I would guarantee to do it myself. In the last war there was a doubt about your cause, and whenever you had a defeat there was rejoicing in the bazaars. In this war you will no doubt have setbacks, and some of them may be serious,<sup>1</sup> and there will be the old temptation to rejoice. But everyone knows your cause is 'just'."

The most respected British official in India said to me, "I am convinced that we have lost a tremendous opportunity."

In Britain some indignation was expressed that there should be 'bargaining' at such a time. Indians did not see things that way. War, as Anatole France remarked, is "a serious matter". It is a very great thing to ask other men to send their bodies to be killed or broken in modern war. War with Germany is an unusually serious matter (although last autumn many did not think so), and every Empire Cabinet engaged must make itself a War Cabinet. India must subordinate her pressing needs to ours.

#### INDIAN REACTION

The Viceroy's statement found fewer friends than perhaps any statement ever issued. It was condemned, not by Congress only, but by the Liberals, the Sikhs, the Indian Christians, by several great Moslem organisations, and by innumerable leading Moslems, including Moslem Leaguers, nor did the Moslem League approve it. Sir Wazir Hassan, former Chief Judge of the Oudh Chief Court, said (October 21):

<sup>1</sup> This was said last October, when no one dreamed that the might of France and Britain could suffer more than a few vexatious reverses.

“My own feelings are of complete despair of British statesmanship, not only in relation to India's problem of freedom, but also in regard to several international crises which were resolved in favour of aggressors and which have arisen and ended without any protest from the British Government”.

Feeling ran so high that the one Premier who had promised unconditional co-operation in the war, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, Premier of the Punjab, the man most essential to India's war effort, first declared (Lahore, October 11), “It is my firm conviction that India will get complete independence after the present war”, and afterwards affirmed more than once that India was sure to get ‘Dominion Status’.

There was no longer any question of even Mr. Gandhi being prepared to offer unconditional co-operation. Congress prepared to launch civil disobedience and, meeting in emergency session at Wardha, on October 21 the Working Committee pulled out its Ministries. It was a time of supreme anxiety for Great Britain, for the American Congress was then deciding whether to lift the embargo or not. What happened in India might very well turn the scale against us. Would American journalists again be cabling back accounts of unarmed men standing in line, to be struck down by the *lathis* of the police?

When Congress, contrary to expectation, did not launch Civil Disobedience, the relief was tremendous. They did not launch it because they thought something was at stake in this war which transcended India's claims, and because they believed—as India still believes—in the sense of justice of the British people. They were willing to give their friends a chance to get India's case across. They were appealing from our proconsuls in New Delhi and Whitehall to Caesar.

You who are reading this book are Caesar.

## PART TWO

# PROBLEMS OF SELF-GOVERNMENT IN INDIA

### CHAPTER I

## THE MOSLEMS

WHEN THE GOVERNMENT began to say (as the Viceroy did, in November and again in January) that India's political progress depended on agreement between Congress and the Moslem League there was resentment. "We did not resign on the communal issue", said Congress leaders. "What has the communal issue to do with the present quarrel?"

During the Round Table Conference there was a rather obvious understanding and alliance between the more intransigent Moslems and certain particularly undemocratic British political circles. That alliance is constantly asserted in India to be the real block to progress.

I believe that I could prove that this is largely true. And there is no question that in former times we frankly practised the 'divide and rule' method in India. From Warren Hastings's time onwards, men made no bones of the pleasure the Hindu-Moslem conflict gave them; even such men as Elphinstone and Malcolm and Metcalfe admitted its value to the British.

There was nothing wrong in this, by the time's standards in every country. Life was a continual struggle of nationality against nationality, and you automatically looked for allies. The Fifth Column is no invention of the present day—only the phrase has been invented. Even St. Paul when in a tight corner looked round and noticed that

there were many Pharisees present. He promptly moved the argument on to the communal plane of his time and cried that he was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee and was in trouble because of Pharisee doctrine—and the Pharisees present rallied at once to his side and decided that he was a fine fellow and had been most unjustly arrested. It has always seemed to me pedantic and unreasonable to blame him for this, as critics who have never been in a tight corner have done.

Today, however, the world is changing faster than its rulers' perception of the fact, and the old alliances are apt to turn into smoking petards that hoist the engineers who set them.

Hindus and Moslems are of the same blood and—as Sir George Forrest has pointed out in his *History of the Indian Mutiny*—"understand each others' systems" (as we who are birds of passage in India do not). They have found a bridge to each other before and may do so again. Mr. Jinnah, the President of the Moslem League, who now claims that there are two nations in India, one Hindu and one Muslim, has the same vernacular as Mr. Gandhi (Gujarati) and was once a Congressman, when he was the spokesman and hope of all who worked for Hindu-Moslem unity—just as in Britain the young Mr. Gladstone was "the rising hope of the stern unbending Tories" and Mr. Neville Chamberlain's father Joseph Chamberlain the rather more than rising hope of the fiery Radicals.

At the opening general session of the First Round Table Conference it was Mr. Jinnah who made the most challenging demand for immediate recognition of India's status, and I well remember the excitement of an American journalist who rushed away shouting: "I'm going to give England hell! Jinnah has voiced the united demand of India and your Prime Minister hasn't said a word in reply!"

In my talk with Mr. Jinnah last October there was this exchange: there is no harm in quoting it, since it is what he has said so often and so often.

"Two nations, Mr. Jinnah! Confronting each other in every province? every town? every village?"

"Two nations. Confronting each other in every province. Every town. Every village. That is the only solution."

"That is a very terrible solution, Mr. Jinnah!"

"It is a terrible solution. But it is the only one".

And so many British politicians and publicists think. I do not believe it, any more than I believe in its kindred and accompanying solution of 'Pakistan'.

#### THE MOSLEM LEAGUE'S DEVELOPMENT

Indian politics are restless with ghosts of memory which haunt them. The Sikhs are a tiny minority in the Punjab but they refuse to forget that the Province was conquered from them as its rulers. If the British go, some of them feel that in a logical and inexorably just Universe things would be set back to 1849. Similarly, the Moslems still keep a dimming memory of the fact that their Emperors once ruled in Delhi, and the Emperor's Nizams and Nawabs ruled the provinces. And the Marathas, now sulking apart in their tents like an Indian Achilles, keep brooding on the time when they watered their horses in the Indus and raided far over India. If the British had not swept them aside they would have become the overlords of India. Ours is not the only 'Imperialism' in India. These others exist, though they are slowly dying.

In the Mutiny British anger burned most ruthlessly against the Moslems. Their Emperor had been the rallying-point of rebellion at Delhi, and they were supposed to be our real enemies. As a young subaltern who afterwards became famous both as soldier and Christian<sup>1</sup> wrote home, "We shall show these rascally Musalmans that, with God's help, Englishmen will still be masters of India". We did; another Christian soldier rubbed the truth home when the Mutiny ended. "The natives are confounded.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Roberts.

They don't know what to attribute it to. They say it is our unanimity, our extraordinary resolution, our individual devotion to the public service, our good destiny, and so on; and I then wind up by saying, 'Yes, it is all these, no doubt. But who gave these virtues to us rather than to you? Why, God'." It was all very clear, and Sir Herbert Edwardes made it so.

After the Mutiny, for a long while the Moslems remained under the shadow, a poor and discouraged community. From that position they moved late and slowly; and the Moslem League was founded in 1907 (to be exact, December 30, 1906). At that time the National Congress largely was what the late Secretary of State for India mistakenly styled it, a Hindu Body. That was the heyday of such Congress leaders as Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, and others whose whole stance and activity certainly justified Moslem suspicion. Even so, for many years the League and the Congress held their annual meetings in the same place and at the same time. You could belong to both and attend both sets of meetings. Both League and Congress wanted the same things and used to send in practically identical resolutions to the Government.

In 1916, when the 'Montford' scheme (the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms) was on the horizon, Congress and the League made the Lucknow Pact, by which the proportion of Moslems in the services and legislatures was agreed. Unfortunately, Congress accepted also communal electorates—the system by which seats reserved for Moslems should be filled by the voting of Moslems only. This has in practice tended to keep power in the hands of bigots, whereas if Moslem representatives were dependent on Hindu as well as Moslem votes the men elected would know they had to consider and conciliate Hindu opinion as well as Moslem.

After the last war, Mr. Gandhi took up—by the greatest mistake of his career—the Khilafat agitation, on behalf of the Sultan of Turkey, the titular Khalif of Islam. Moslems flocked into the Congress, and Congress and League leaders worked together; Mr. Gandhi and the two Ali brothers



toured the country. Turkey presently de-islamised herself and herself rejected the Khilafat. In despair and sense of impotence Indian Moslems lapsed into a Sinn Fein attitude, 'ourselves by ourselves'. Relations between Congress and the League grew steadily worse.

Today these relations are bad. But it is nonsense to say, as people whose knowledge of India began yesterday keep on saying, that Hindu-Moslem relations are now worse than they have ever been. Congress is debited with all the riots, though the worst riots, those in Lucknow between Shiah and Sunnis, are a purely Moslem affair. The riots of today are mere street corner brawls, compared with the pitched battles that took place in Calcutta and Cawnpur, ten years ago.

#### DOES THE MOSLEM LEAGUE STAND FOR ALL MOSLEMS?

The League now has a membership roll, on a two-anna basis, that undercuts the Congress four-anna basis. The League certainly has a large membership, though I have never met anyone who knew how large. Congress claims that it has still more Moslems on its own rolls. Its Moslem membership runs into hundreds of thousands.

After the 1937 elections the Moslem League was unable to form a single Government.

Take the four provinces where Moslems form a majority.

The North-West Frontier Province (which has succeeded to the Wild and Woolly West as the favourite battleground of the Movies) had a Congress Moslem Government, though Hindus are only  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent of the population.

Sind has a Moslem independent Government, with which Congress members were and are on excellent terms.

The Punjab has a Moslem Premier with a coalition Cabinet, in which are Sikhs and Hindus. The Punjab is the one Province where Congress is comparatively weak. The Moslem League, however, won only one seat. In Sind and the N.W.F.P. it was "not so successful".

In Bengal, Congress was the largest single party, with 50 seats. The Moslem League won 40, and Independent

Moslems, including 38 of the Praja ('peasant') Party, 78. The present Premier of Bengal was then (1937) a Congressman and was willing to serve in a Congress Cabinet. Congress was then against coalitions, so he joined the League, as did a number of other Moslems, and he holds power because the 25 European members support his Government. There is a strong Moslem group in opposition.

The Premiers of Bengal and the Punjab are now members of the Moslem League, but they are very recent members. It is universally known that the Moslem League has a standing and cordial invitation to keep out of these two Provinces and their affairs.

So much for the Provincial Governments.

As regards population, in All India the Shiah, who claim to be twenty per cent of the Moslem community, are pro-Congress. So are three powerful organisations: the Momins, the Ahrars, and the Jumiat-ul-Ulema (the organisation of the Maulvis or theologians). The present President of the Congress, the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, is a Moslem theologian greatly respected. He had the unusual distinction, for an Indian Moslem, of being born in the Prophet's own land: he is a famous Arabic and Persian scholar, an orator admired for the perfection of his style, and has often acted both as 'moderator' in the Shiah-Sunni disputes and as 'select preacher' for the Id and Bakr-Id festivals in the chief mosques.

If you are going to start talking about Moslem culture, where are your finest examples? In picking the best that All India could afford you would have to include both the Maulana, who presides over the National Congress, and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who is a Hindu by birth.

Why should the Moslem League veto till the crack of doom any implementation of the now old pledge of Dominion Status?

#### A TACTICAL ERROR

In the elections of 1937, the United Provinces was the key Province. It is the Province where Nehru and his

family count most, it is the Province where Moslem memories of former grandeur are poignant. What happened in the U.P. was likely to be followed in other Provinces.

Everyone expected Congress to be beaten. This is matter of common knowledge, admitted to me by the British best entitled to know, both in London and in Lucknow. At the last minute, therefore, many Congress Moslems stood as League candidates.

Congress swept the board. Then came the making of Cabinets.

If you reserve places in a Legislature for a group, you will not easily get it out of that group's head that as a corollary it should have the same representation reserved in the Cabinet. "Otherwise," you are told indignantly, "you give us representation but it is a farce! You give us no power!" Congress had an absurdly tiny Cabinet, one of six Ministers, to fill, and refused to put in Moslem Leaguers. This caused deep anger, and this event more than any other thing that has happened was responsible for the present bad relations. The League, refused power, went into not merely opposition but increasingly bitter opposition.

I have argued this matter with Congress Premiers. They replied: "Yes, but how can you do your work unless you have a homogeneous Cabinet? Coalition Cabinets are always weak and often wicked. And why should we refuse Cabinet positions, when we have so very few, to Moslems who stood by us and give them to Moslems who oppose us?" "We will not have in the Cabinet", said one leader who had a lot of say in what happened (and he was a Moslem), "a man who was our comrade for twenty years and then ratted because he thought we were going to be beaten!"

Nevertheless, it was a tactical error. So long as you have separate electorates you cannot have parties form on other than communal lines (unless you have a party which deliberately rejects the religious label, as Congress does). Until separate electorates go, India will have to pass through a period of coalition governments and do

the best she can with them. And of course, there must be Cabinets of a decent size.

Congress leaders are coming to realise their mistake, as the following talk with a Premier showed me:

"If I ever form a Ministry again I shall offer a place to So-and-So".

"But will he make a good Minister?"

"No" (resignedly). "He will make a very bad one. But what does that matter? If you have four or five good Ministers you can afford to have one bad one. The good Ministers will carry the bad Minister".

From this it will be seen that Indians are learning to understand very well the principles of Cabinet Government. How can we in Britain go on saying that they are not fit for self-government on our lines?

We really must pay some attention to what Indians think about their own affairs. Hindus and Moslems know each other far better than we know them; they meet constantly and not—as we meet them—in occasional social or political intercourse. Very few Indians take at surface value the Moslem League's present intransigence. They consider that the League is staking its claims at their possible highest, against the final show-down and settlement which cannot be put off for ever.

Sir Samuel Hoare last autumn drew a majestic picture of the British Government going forward in company with the 'minorities'. Those who rest in the belief that this is what will happen should think again.

The Moslems are not a 'minority' in any real sense, as regards All India. The word calls up the idea of a shrinking timid oppressed community, which the Indian Moslems emphatically are not. In four Provinces they form the majority, and when British writers stress the iniquity of putting Indian Moslems under "*Hindu raj*" or Hindu rule, they ignore the possibility of Hindus being under a Moslem *raj*. I am afraid that sometimes the desire to have your own communal Province has in it the quite human wish to be able "to wallop your own nigger in your own yard".

## PAKISTAN?

For some years there has been an agitation to split off from the rest of India a Moslem State—Pakistan (“the land of the pure”, i.e. in religion: and also by its name suggesting the first letters of three component parts of this State—Punjab, Afghanistan, Kashmir). This would at first consist of Kashmir, the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, and the western districts of the United Provinces, including the Delhi enclave.

There is some dispute as to who started the notion. It is often said to have been Sir Muhammad Iqbal, the poet. In *The Observer* I once said that he supported the Pakistan plan. Iqbal was a friend, and he set my misconception right. After speaking of his own despondency at the chaos he saw coming “on my vast undisciplined and starving land” (what magnificent English these Indians write!) he went on to say that he thought the Pakistan plan would be disastrous to the British Government, disastrous to the Hindu community, disastrous to the Moslem community. “But I am the President of the Moslem League and therefore it is my duty to support it”.

In the Punjab, which would provide most of the population of Pakistan, the Moslems are a majority—but a small one. Secondly, if you take a map you will see that Pakistan would face the rest of India across an indefensible frontier that for the most part runs over flat levels. Can any sound State be created except along the line of strong natural boundaries? Look at what happens to Belgium continually. Consider how much mischief has followed from the fact that ‘Prussia’ slopped all over the map, with no strong natural borders and with possessions in other parts of Germany.

Perhaps the most serious peril is a psychological one. Behind the plan is the hope of a Moslem block that would be mainly non-Indian, that would bring back the conditions that existed before sea-power (wielded by the British) changed them, when India was dependent on

Central Asia (Afghanistan and Turkestan), from which raiding armies and conquerors swept down. Hindus visualise a new strong Pan-Islamic Power, possibly in some kind of German alliance, and in despair they are beginning to think of getting even Japanese support as the only possible counter-defence.

I was astonished last autumn to find that certain official circles were keen on the Pakistan idea; and still more astonished to find that some of our own British 'Left' were beginning to be persuaded to it. There is no surer way of plunging India into eternal civil war.

#### IS THERE A SOLID MOSLEM BLOCK IN ASIA?

So far as I can discover, two things prevent the British Government from giving a definite date to their promise of Dominion Status and beginning to implement it now. These are: (1) The belief that the seventy million or more Indian Moslems are solidly united in the Moslem League. (2) The belief that Islam is a solid block in sentiment from Assam to Ankara or at any rate Aleppo.

Both beliefs are myths.

Afghanistan is going to go the path of secularisation as Iran and Turkey have done, and swiftly: Afghanistan means to enter the modern world. In Kabul the Moslem League is not regarded with any affection. But Afghanistan is not our present business, though what is happening there is very interesting.

Baluchistan, politically backward and not yet a Province, is pro-Congress. We have seen that the North-West Frontier Province had a Congress Moslem Ministry. Beyond the wild border the Afridis have a Congress movement (which, I regret to say, does not as yet accept 'non-violence') that has 20,000 members. There are strong Congress movements in Waziristan and the Malakand Agency.

#### THE REAL HINDU-MOSLEM CLASH

This is largely, but not entirely, economic. Speaking for India as a whole, the Hindus are the 'haves' (so far

as India has any 'haves') and the Moslems the 'have-nots'. The Moslems are poor and for the most part poorly educated. In many parts of India they need special representation in all services, by the majority community's consent, fixed by agreement in the Constitution.

Mr. Jinnah compiled a list of Moslem grievances. To this Congress replied through the President last autumn, Rajendra Prasad, by offering to accept without question the decision on it of the Chief Justice, Sir Maurice Gwyer. I think the list was no great matter, and have not had the luck as yet to meet anyone who took it very seriously.

But this does not mean that behind it were not real grievances. The coming of Indian Ministries has excited the Indian peasant. "There has been a good deal of bumptiousness in our villages," remarked Nehru. The peasant, like a stick full of sap springing up suddenly from suppression, has often been provoking; some of the complaints made as counter-charges, not only to the Moslem League's charges but against the police, have been absurd. A solitary Moslem family in a village which is otherwise solidly Hindu and Congress has often had a thin time. The Moslem villager flies to Jinnah for protection, as the Congress villager flies to Gandhi or Nehru.

Congress leaders have not been wise in their handling of the communal trouble. In the 1937 elections Congress contested 58 of the Moslem seats in the provinces, showing—as Dr. Z. A. Ahmad, a Congress Moslem, said—"a highly deplorable vacillation and lack of self-confidence . . . the field was left entirely open to communal and reactionary individuals and organisations." They have therefore themselves largely to thank for the growth of the League and of its power. Then Government more and more treated the League as representing all Moslems, which helped it still more.

Secondly, in natural resentment at their quarrel with the Government being shifted on to the communal issue, last autumn, when there were times when they could

have made a settlement with the League, Congress leaders refused. They assumed too readily that a settlement was in their pocket at any time that it suited them to bring it off.

But political times and tides wait for no one, and that tide was not caught.

Moreover, besides the economic cleavage (which will lessen) and the gap in education (which will gradually go and ought to be made to go rapidly), there is a real religious clash.

Congress cannot help having its membership mainly Hindu—India is a mainly Hindu country. And Hinduism has a poor reputation with the outside world. It is not possible to exaggerate the appalling impression made on visitors from the outside world, almost at the outset of their Indian tour, by the sights they see so soon. If they begin at Colombo and pass from Ceylon to India, they see Madura: if at Calcutta, they see Kalighat and may go on next to Puri (Juggernaut) and certainly go on to Benares.

Islam is at its best and noblest in Delhi, where the British see it continually. It is no wonder that most Englishmen feel themselves attracted to Islam, by the simplicity and majesty and purity of its monuments, by the sight of the crowd bent reverently in prayer in such a courtyard as that of the Jama Masjid. Bishop Heber (who is remembered mainly because he wrote about "the heathen in his blindness") said of the monuments of Indian Islam in Upper India that their makers "built like giants and finished like jewellers". Islam has a great past and will have a great future; it really does not need to be communal and bigoted. Islam has its strength now where that strength has always been, in the brotherhood which it gives its adherents, a brotherhood which Christianity has never given in anything like the same degree. If you become a Moslem you are at once in a very real sense the brother of all Moslems everywhere.

Of course there never will be any 'settlement' of the Hindu-Moslem question if you mean that there will cease to be differences of outlook and conviction, any more



than there will ever be a settlement of the Protestant-Catholic question.

What there can be, and must be, and soon will be, is an agreement by which all parties remember that they are Indians. The majority community must make the most sweeping concessions of legislative places and of jobs, to last during the period when Hindus and Moslems are learning to work together. Gandhi has consistently expressed his realisation of this necessity. I end this chapter by repeating: There is *no* solid Moslem block stretching from Assam to Aleppo: Pakistan, if it ever came into being, would not be an abutment on a kind of Moslem League spreading across Central and Western Asia, it would find itself a perilous island. Separate electorates must go, and the British Government is the party which can enable them to go. And it is a myth, our belief that the seventy millions of Indian Moslems are solidly against Congress and Dominion Status. Many leading members of the League are open to reason and in private admit this.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRINCES

THERE ARE 584 'States' in India; the Butler Report recognised 562, and there is always some room for variation, as the reader will presently understand.

The States differ greatly in size, population, and importance. The Khan of Kalat, in Baluchistan, rules 54,000 square miles or an area larger than England, but has only 300,000 subjects and ranks as a second-class Prince, with a 19-gun salute. Still larger, and out of comparison more important, is Hyderabad, the Premier State, which is as large as Italy, with probably 15 million inhabitants. At the other end of the scale are "minute holdings in Kathiawar of a few acres only".<sup>1</sup> Kathiawar

<sup>1</sup> The Butler Report.

abounds in tiny States, largely because of the benevolence of the renowned Jonathan Duncan, Governor of Bombay (1795-1811). He recognised people as 'Princes' on very slight provocation—it all depended on how they paid their dues to the Paramount Power.

These Princes have many titles, of which Maharaja and Nawab are the best known to Western readers. It by no means follows that men who are given these titles are ruling Princes. The Aga Khan, for example, so well known as a racing and religious leader, is not a Prince, except as a Cardinal is a Prince of the Roman Church (but he is more than that; he is by right of inheritance the Head of a Moslem sect). Nor is the Maharaja of Burdwan, also well known in London, a Prince; he is merely a big landlord. There are Nawabs who are only landlords.

Native India now occupies not far off half of India's total area, and its 711,000 square miles can be seen on the map, marked yellow, stretching in an almost continuous line from north to south and right across the centre. The States have no seaports of the first importance, and not much coastline, and most of that coastline rocky or swampy. Their population is now perhaps close on 90 millions (out of what will probably prove in 1941 to be 400 millions for All India).

It has been usual to say that the only way to classify them among themselves is by the number of guns each chieftain is entitled to by way of ceremonial salute. Thus, there are five first-class (21-gun) States: six second-class (19-gun): thirteen third-class (17-gun): and 102 States entitled to 11 or 13 guns. This does not mean that the States who receive equal salutes are all on the same level of power. It is a level of importance rather than of independence. The degree of independence is due to the way the State came into existence and into relations with the British Government.

In 1921, the Chamber of Princes was instituted, and meets at New Delhi. The Princes (like the I.C.S.) have become an august trade union, which on occasion retains

great British lawyers at magnificent fees. Like all the rest of the world they are much interested in 'propaganda', and there is an easy way to affluence for any foreign journalist who possesses a reasonably adroit pen and is prepared to write to an interesting brief. Since the institution of the Chamber of Princes, another category has arisen, besides the gun-salute one. One hundred and eight States are directly represented in the Chamber, another 127 are represented by 12 members. The remaining States are mere 'estates' and are without representation.

Thus already, and by agreement among the Princes themselves, the inevitable process has begun. The more or less genuine Princes are emerging, by a sifting process which the British Peace postponed, and the rest are sinking into the rank of local gentry. In any future which is to be of any use to India, this process must be carried further.

#### VARIATIONS IN SIZE AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

For—in 1940—the States have become a political scandal, an economic absurdity. Whenever we are told—and we are told constantly—that self-government for India because of the Princes is an impossibility all these 580 States are brought forward imposingly, to prove the immensity of the difficulty. We need have no hesitation, then, in analysing this difficulty. We shall soon see it shrink to more manageable proportions.

During the First Round Table Conference His Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner was reported to have said that one Indian Prince ruled nothing but a well. This was epigrammatic sharpening and exaggeration—but only just. Fourteen States are less than one square mile, two of them being under a third of a mile: 32 consist of one mile: another 95 are between five square miles and one mile.

Turn to population. One State contains 27 subjects, another 87: another 27 States have their population hidden inside that of larger areas and it is not ascertainable, but is anyway very small. Another 133 States have less than

1,000 residents. I am using the 1931 Census results, to which the reader can add ten per cent if he likes to be generous—the States' population as a rule does not increase quite as fast as that of British India.

What about Revenue? One State has a revenue of 80 rupees, which at present rates of exchange works out at under half a crown a week. Another State has 93 rupees. It is plain that after allowing for the expenses of whatever administration there may be this does not leave very much over for wine, women, and song. Sixteen States do not top the thousand-rupee standard, and another 143 States are less than 10,000 rupees.

Of course, some States have a truly princely revenue. The Nizam of Hyderabad is often said to be the richest man in the world. But it will be seen that the States are ripe for a pretty strong shaking—since it is 1940.

The All-India States' Peoples' Conference, at its eighth annual session, at Ludhiana, February, 1939, passed this resolution:

“It is the considered opinion of the Conference that only those States which have a population exceeding 20 lakhs<sup>1</sup> souls or Revenue exceeding 50 lakhs rupees can maintain the standard of administration necessary and suitable for being workable units for the purpose of uniting with the Provinces in a scheme of a Free and Federated India and therefore all States not coming within the above category should be amalgamated, either singly or by groups, with the neighbouring Provinces for the purpose of administration, with suitable provisions for the reasonable rights and privileges of the rulers concerned, and this Conference therefore requests the National Congress to appoint a Committee of Inquiry for the purpose of finding ways and means to facilitate such an amalgamation.”

Only 21 States escape the meshes of that resolution, which does not strike me as a very subversive one.

<sup>1</sup> A *lakh* is 100,000.

For the States are often a perfect nuisance to ordinary people, and to themselves. "The area of an average *district* in an Indian province . . . is 4,000 square miles and its population eight lakhs."<sup>1</sup> But Kathiawar (which I have mentioned earlier) contains in its small area no less than 283 States, of which the 274 less important have a total annual revenue of about a million pounds sterling, which "has to maintain 274 ruling families and also run 274 separate semi-independent administrations". Jonathan Duncan's activities have provided the people of Kathiawar, 130 years after his death, with "one separate State for every 25 square miles of area or every 500 heads of population". This "reveals the existence of a problem" which "transcends the struggle for democracy and freedom within individual States. Smallness of size and lack of financial resources of a State can hardly be remedied merely by the introduction of 'responsible self-government'. A small State does not cease to be a small State after it has changed from an autocracy to a democracy". These tiny States cannot afford to run a modern administration, either now or at any time within the imagination of man.

Even the largest States are often not homogeneous units. Baroda, for example, is severed into a number of districts dotted in and out of British India—and Baroda is one of the five most important States. Another Prince complained bitterly to me that his State had a stretch of seventy miles between one of its parts and another. He and two neighbouring Princes all tried to collect revenue from one unhappy village which they all claimed. He told me the people did not like this.

#### HISTORY OF THE PRINCES

In recent years the Princes and their propagandists have talked big about their 'sovereignty' and 'sovereign rights'. The talk is both recent (except for sporadic breaks, which no one took very seriously) and unfounded in historical fact.

<sup>1</sup> Shanti Dhavan, *What Are the Indian States*, 8.

I can think of perhaps two existing States—apart from Kalat—which could claim to be independent when the British rose to power. The rest were either under Princes who admitted—or, rather, claimed with pride—that they were officers of the Mogul Emperor or at any rate paid tribute to him. The Rajput States, when we rescued them in 1815–19, had sunk as low in impotence as any States can ever have sunk without becoming extinct. The Maratha States, another important group, were estates under descendants of the great Maratha leader Sivaji's *Astha-pradhan* or Cabinet of eight members or were territories under great Maratha military chieftains (Baroda, Gwalior, Indore are in this class). The Nizam—who is today India's Premier Prince, in a class by himself, with the title of His Exalted Highness and Britain's Faithful Ally—as his title (Nizam-ul-Mulk, 'Regulator of the State') shows claimed the status only of the Emperor's Prime Minister. The original Nizam was the Emperor's Wazir or Prime Minister, but he left Delhi about 1720 and settled down as Subahdar of the Deccan or South India and soon became in fact independent. When the Nawab of Oudh in 1819, in recognition of vast financial help that he had given to the East India Company's Government, was allowed by Lord Hastings, the Governor-General, to style himself King, the Nizam of that day, who had loyally refused a similar honour, spoke about his action with great bitterness. There was only one 'King' in India, the King of Delhi, by which name the helpless and impoverished descendant of the Emperor was known officially.

All other States, except Mysore (which was then a puppet State under British administrators—the British Government had new-created it, under a child who belonged to the former Hindu dynasty, after the defeat and death of Tipu Sultan in 1799) and Cochin and Travancore and Coorg (which disappeared fifteen years later), acknowledged the King of Delhi and acknowledged him as they did not acknowledge the British Government, whose presence in India they regretted as that of a temporary interloper.

The British Government too recognised itself as officially, so far as status went, under the King of Delhi's suzerainty. Clive, Warren Hastings, the Governors-General (though with increasing recalcitrance), even Metcalfe himself, who chafed under the recognition, expressly and repeatedly did this. The Punjab was then independent, under Sikh rulers; but the Punjab is now part of British India.

The political framework of India was built in 20 years: 1799-1819, between the death of Tipu Sultan of Mysore and the elimination of the Peshwa, the head of the Maratha chieftains. (The Nana Sahib of the Mutiny was the adopted son of the last Peshwa.) That framework has stayed substantially unchanged for 120 years, in which the outside world has been made and remade drastically and repeatedly.

Both before and after this period the States lost territory or were absorbed into British India, in a long series of wars. The one exception, Hyderabad, owed its exemption to the fact that, apart from one confused period of a few months when it strayed almost by accident into the rank of our enemies, it was our consistent though lukewarm ally. Consequently, wherever the British Government won another war Hyderabad was given more territory—granted grudgingly and accepted grumblingly. In the 'thirties of last century the practice grew up of annexing States, often very unjustly, whenever this could be done with the slightest show of cause, and Lord Dalhousie enforced a doctrine of 'lapse', by which (he claimed) a State whose ruler died without leaving what by rigid British rules of inheritance he considered a proper heir lapsed to the East India Company. The British officials who understood Indian sentiment and customs condemned this doctrine strongly, and many of the Princes had a very raw deal. In some ways no State had a rawer deal, over many decades, than Hyderabad. But I am not going to run up a historical survey now. All we need notice is that this doctrine of lapse did as much as anything to precipitate the outbreak of 1857, which it

suits us to call a Mutiny but which was largely a genuine war to recover independence.

In the Mutiny, the greater States' rulers stood by us (though their people often fought us—inefficiently and hesitatingly, as the mutineers as a whole fought us, but with anger) and their help was of tremendous value. For this service they earned our gratitude, but the fact is remembered against them today by India—which thinks a great deal about the Mutiny. After the Mutiny, the States' relations with the Paramount Power were overhauled and set on a clear basis by a series of treaties and *sanads* (documents). There have been no more annexations, and they have been loyal and valuable helpers of the British Government, and in our last two wars the Princes have generously come to our aid in every possible way.

Two last remarks. By standards of international morality, our treatment of the Princes—whose rights were every bit as good as ours, being rights of conquest when they were not rights of inheritance—was often open to grave criticism. But the British Empire has never been run on strictly Y.M.C.A. lines. Indian opinion, which today looks on the Princes as a nuisance and anomaly, does not bother about this. Indian Nationalists are very glad that we annexed as many States as we did and often express the wish that we had absorbed the lot.

Secondly, 120 years ago the Princes represented the last struggles of Indian Nationalism and Independence. Today, by perhaps the most majestic turnover in history, they are the last strongholds in the world anywhere of feudalism and they block Independence.

#### RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

Theoretically, the leading States are independent Powers, who have given up certain rights, especially control of their own international affairs. They are survivals from a time when the Paramount Power was but one of many under the King of Delhi, and the earlier treaties



were conducted on a basis of alleged equality between the high contracting parties. Lawyers can always appeal to these treaties with some show of reason and it can easily be proved that the British Government have made many encroachments from time to time.

As a matter of fact, however, the British Government since 1857 has on the whole behaved with patience and tolerance, just as the Princes as a rule have behaved with generosity. No one seriously questions either fact, though the opposite claim will no doubt serve as a good debating-point whenever the parties concerned are sparring for position. The real position is well understood and accepted good-humouredly.

The greatest Princes have power of life and death over their subjects, and such legislative assemblies as have been introduced are largely eyewash. Mysore and Travancore are generally adduced as exceptions to this, and we can let it go at that. Some Princes have introduced a Civil List, but it will not usually survive much scrutiny (not that scrutiny is invited).

The actual amount of power a Prince possesses is largely dependent on the force of character of the Political Officer who represents the British Government, as his Resident or as the Governor-General's Agent for a group of States. The British Government has interfered not infrequently, and some of these interferences are recorded in blue-books. It interfered last century when one Prince punished a thief by chopping off a hand and foot: when another mutilated a slave by cutting off nose and ears: when a third had two jailers flogged to death: when a fourth impaled a subject: when a fifth publicly tortured an offender: when a sixth "committed an outrage of too shocking and disgusting a character to bear repetition".<sup>1</sup> There were certainly sharp private protests to the one State which after the Mutiny persisted in the ceremonial burning of at least one widow with each dead ruler. Interference has sometimes gone so far as to insist on abdication,

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. Lee-Warner, *The Protected Princes of India*, 306.

and this has happened more than once in recent years. In most States a sentence of death must have the British Political Officer's sanction. The States have most of them largely adapted their legal systems to those of British India.

There is discontent, however, because the Princes' subjects increasingly desire representative government. The new industrial and urban populations of some States do not feel feudally, as many of the people certainly still feel in some of the Rajput States, for example.

#### WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT THE STATES?

It is often said that if the British left India the Princes would leave also (or a little sooner). I do not believe this, although, it is true, very few of them would have survived through the last hundred years without British support. There is a great deal of pride and sentiment attached to some of the Princes' persons and inherited status. And this is not felt merely by some of their subjects. The three chief Maratha States are far outside the proper Maratha area, and only a minority of their subjects are Marathas. But they are regarded with pride by the Maratha people, as representing the vestiges of their own former greatness, which seemed to promise them the overlordship of all India if the British had not snatched this away.

There have been Commissions about this question of the Princes, but these Commissions have been very wary of committing themselves. After all, the Princes have been the Paramount Power's steadfast friends, and the Paramount Power is not going to turn down its friends or make recommendations that will hurt their feelings. There was a Commission under Sir Harcourt Butler a few years ago. Almost its only definite, or semi-definite, remark is this cautious one—about the Political Secretary, who at New Delhi is in charge of the Paramount Power's dealings with the Princes:

“It has been represented to us that the pay and precedence of the Political Secretary should be raised

so as to give him a special position among the Secretaries to Government and thus assist him to approach other departments with added weight and authority."

That is about as far as you will ever get the Indian Government to go, and perhaps as far as you can expect it to go.

The Princes, of course, are quite wrong as survivals—in 1940, and their rule covers great injustice, the worst of all being the absence of freedom of the press or expression. "A thick veil covers them and even prying eyes may not peep in," writes Jawaharlal Nehru (July, 1939). "These States themselves dislike publicity, and discourage visitors, except those superior persons who go occasionally to join in vast organised slaughter of inoffensive animals". These organised slaughters, by the way, have long been among the major scandals of India. Whole villages will be taken off their crops, to shepherd to the right place the tigers which some Viceroy is to butcher. The system, perhaps more than anything else, helps to give the rulers of India, British and Indian, that appearance of sub-adolescence which is so disquieting to the outside world.

But the States have merits. Their rule is more personal than that of British India—concerning which Rabindranath Tagore has complained that it is like those canned foods which are advertised as 'untouched by hand'. The British Government no doubt is more efficient, but it is like a gigantic pitiless engine,

"exempt itself  
From aught that it inflicts".

Through the cracks and gaps of less efficient rule personality percolates. There are more ways of making opinion known, when ruler and ruled are of one blood, than the vote. There would be far less injustice if the Princes were not insured by the British Government against their own subjects.

It is very difficult when discussing the Princes not to

let light-heartedness break in occasionally. The book which all the Round Table Conference Delegates were reading when the Conference began was "H.H.", an analysis of the Princely Order by an Indian journalist. It was nothing like as effective as his analysis of American complacency, in his "Uncle Sham", a counterblast to "Mother India". The Princes at the Conference studied his assault on them, and were unruffled. As a democrat I know that I ought to feel nothing but reprobation for the Princes and their existence today, but my actual feelings sometimes resemble those of a missionary's daughter I once knew. "O God", she prayed dutifully, "make the heathen stop worshipping their idols! though" (she added) "it's very interesting to watch them doing it."

After all, are the Princes any absurder than the British peerage—in 1940?

The trouble is, they are more short of members who are of the first rank (or a decent second rank) in character and ability than they have been for many years. Their personnel is of poor quality. This is partly from long discouragement; the Central Government does not like a Prince who shows too much individuality. It is his business to remember that he is part of a team; he must play for his side, even though he has to go in several places lower down than the players who live in New Delhi.

#### CONGRESS POLICY AS REGARDS THE PRINCES

The present policy of Congress is to leave the Princes on one side, as a problem not quite ripe yet. When British India gets self-government any Prince who is willing to democratise his State and bring it into line with British India will be welcome to enter the Federation. His State's representatives would then be elected, not nominated by him.

Would that be so subversive and drastic? We have complete adult suffrage in Great Britain. Does that mean that we get Parliaments composed of poor and uninfluential people? Every House of Commons, whatever its political complexion, contains well over a hundred Etonians. Eton

is a very great school, but is it great enough to stand for over one-sixth of this country's freely elected public opinion?

You know how our cabinets are made up.

Even if some hundred princelings became local squires and the greater Princes established genuine democratic institutions and civil lists and gave their subjects the right to elect the States' representatives to the Central Indian Government, do you seriously believe that India would rush headlong into Bolshevism?

### CHAPTER III

## THE OTHER MINORITIES

THE SCHEDULED CLASSES (as the Depressed Classes—the Untouchables and near-Untouchables—are now called) may number about 40 millions.

The number is often put higher, by including all forest and aboriginal tribes—whose untouchability is mainly inaccessibility and does not seem fully established, even in the minds of orthodox Hindus. Also, untouchability varies greatly. There are (so far as I remember) 16 untouchable castes in Bengal from whose hands even Brahmans may accept tobacco and water. Untouchability is at its worst in South India.

Mr. Gandhi's efforts to remove untouchability are not the least part of his striking career. He has an untouchable girl in his own household.

The best-known leader of the Scheduled Classes is Dr. Ambedkar, an *alumnus* of German and American universities, as well as of Bombay. He has, or once had, his own grievance against us over his caste. He is a Mahar (hereditarily, a leather worker) and on the memorial pillar at Koregaon, where in 1818 was fought an action which Colonel Tod styled "the Indian Thermopylae", I am told that half the names of the Indian dead are

those of Mahars. His father and grandfather were sepoys, but the Government, in deference to caste prejudice, in 1892 ceased to recruit Mahars for the Army.

Ambedkar therefore became a lawyer, and incidentally a master in his own very vigorous and individual fashion of the English language. He is a most exhilarating polemist, utterly fearless, with a wide command of the unexpected and devastating illustration—historical or otherwise—and his energy flies so swiftly that it produces by the way most effective results. Speaking of the little influence that his enemies' attacks had on him, he said—looking fiercely at me: "In fact, I am not only hide-bound! I am skin-flint!" He is. If anything by Ambedkar comes your way, read it, and you will understand why he often makes orthodox Hindus hopping mad. He is one of the dozen most astonishing men in India.

It is often said that India must not be allowed to govern herself because without us the Scheduled Classes will have such a bad time.

What does Ambedkar think? In his Presidential Address (All-India Depressed Classes Congress, August, 1930) he said:

"I am afraid that the British choose to advertise our unfortunate conditions, not with the object of removing them, but only because such a course serves well as an excuse for retarding the political progress of India. Before the British came you were in the loathsome condition due to your untouchability. Has the British Government done anything to remove your untouchability? Before the British you could not draw water from the village well. Has the British Government secured you the right to the well? Before the British you could not enter the temple. Can you enter now? Before the British you were denied entry into the police force. Does the British Government admit you in the force? . . . Those who have held so much power over the country for such a long time must have done some

good. But there is certainly no fundamental improvement in your position. So far as you are concerned, the British Government has accepted the arrangements as it found them and has preserved them faithfully in the manner of the Chinese tailor who, when given an old coat as a pattern, produced with pride an exact replica, rents, patches and all. Your wrongs have remained as open sores and they have not been righted. . . .

“It is only in a Swaraj constitution that you stand any chance of getting the political power into your own hands without which you cannot bring salvation to your people”.

He has fought with skill and uncanny success to get for the Scheduled Classes representation far in excess of what anyone ever expected they would get.

He is a realist. When some kindly Brahman publicly washes some scores or hundreds of untouchables in the Ganges, Ambedkar comes across with no bouquet of thanks. Nor is he excited when a South Indian Raja opens a temple or two (to be carefully recleansed after the untouchables have gone home). What the Scheduled Classes want is practical help. The day when we might have given it has gone by. Ambedkar wants Dominion Status right enough, though the Scheduled Classes and he himself in particular are often cited as being against it. What these Classes want is enough to eat and decent human status. They are part of the general problem of India's misery.

#### THE MAHASABHA

Though not a ‘minority’, the Mahasabha, which stands for militant Hinduism, is constantly cited as one.

Mahasabha leaders well known outside India, both formerly Congress leaders (Malaviya is still on the rolls), are the venerable Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Principal of the Hindu University, Benares, a gentleman of the most polished and considerate manners and in politics rather like a Gladstonian Liberal; and Dr. Moonje,

whose beard (as has often been remarked) gives him the exact appearance of a Moslem Maulvi while his eyes burn with anti-Moslem and anti-Christian zeal. Malaviya was the only Hindu who kept complete orthodoxy at the Round Table Conference. Moonje is anything but orthodox: a Maratha whose energies are now given up to a military academy he has founded. He will be happy when India, anything but strictly 'non-violent' and filled with peasant philosophers, becomes instead a large country abounding in tanks and planes and Bren guns. He spends much time reclaiming Untouchables who have lapsed to Islam or Christianity.

The Mahasabha is now anti-Congress.

#### THE SIKHS

For the purposes of this book all we need note is that they are a local problem; nearly all their 3½ millions are in the Punjab and Punjab States. They are great soldiers and fine men. There have been times when passions have run high in the Punjab and there has been talk of civil war. But the Sikhs have abundant common sense as well as fearlessness. For practical and political purposes their community, while preserving its own sturdy outlook, is close to the Hindu community. The Sikhs are a minority but are not likely to become an oppressed one for very long.

#### THE PARSEES

We were told last autumn that the Parsees are now fiercely anti-Congress.

Yes: and for one main reason. It is the silversmiths of Diana of Ephesus' reason for being against St. Paul.

The Congress Ministries made a start with Prohibition in Bombay City, Ahmadabad, and certain districts of Madras and the United Provinces. The Parsees controlled the liquor trade (as many other trades) in Bombay.

The Parsees had long warning that this would happen, yet many of them supported Congress. They will get used to Prohibition, and their anger will pass.



The community are Zoroastrians (fire-worshippers). They are second to no community in India in wealth, education, social standards. I have been told that you never find a poor Quaker, the Society of Friends so looks after its own. The Parsees similarly look after their own people. Some years ago, a French lady who had married a Parsee wanted to become a Parsee in religion. She was turned down, although personally everything that was desirable, because it was feared that if you could enter the community from outside all the Bombay beggars would want to swarm in. I was told this by a leader of the community.

The Parsee community (who number a little over one hundred thousand) has no reserved representation in Legislatures. It does far better without any. It always will do far better. Unless the world gets turned utterly upside down the Parsees will never need any special protection, any more than the Rockefellers or British peerage need it.

They certainly want self-government for India, although they are just now angry about Prohibition and afraid of Socialism.

#### THE INDIAN CHRISTIANS

This community has given India some of its most esteemed leaders in recent years; India has never known a purer spirit or purer patriot than the late Dr. Rudra, for example. The community is full of a vigorous nationalist feeling. It does not want the West to protect it against the rest of India.

#### THE DOMICILED OR ANGLO-INDIAN COMMUNITY

Here we have a bad conscience; or ought to have. Some of these are pure-blood Europeans, and a few of them, living in favoured districts such as the Nilgiris or Himalayan fruit-growing valleys, are comfortably off. But most of them are very poor, very backward, and the community has a great dread of the future.

In the early days, nearly all British officials had Indian wives or mistresses. Teignmouth Shore, afterwards revered as one of the founders of the Bible Society, had a liaison; so had even Sir Charles Metcalfe, when he was British Resident in Delhi. I once had occasion as a historian to hunt through the baptismal registers of a hundred and thirty years ago, and I could not help noticing that most of the births were what we should style by our standards 'illegitimate'. In those days it was nearly always the father who was British.

Today the position is reversed. Very many Indians, and among them numerous Indians, Hindu and Moslem, of the finest families, have daughters-in-law or nieces-in-law who are European or American. If you mix with Indian society you see many Western ladies in *saris*. These are regular marriages, and since the father of the children is now usually Indian the children are brought up as Indians. So this problem—the problem of those of mixed blood—will gradually lessen.

Nothing in our record is meaner than our treatment of Eurasians. We brought them into existence, and we despise them. In old days their service was magnificent. Name after name of gallant British officers in the Anglo-Maratha wars is the name of a Eurasian. If they are depressed they sink into the faults of both sides. But repeatedly—I think, almost invariably—if given a chance they show the best qualities of both sides.

They ran the railways and other public services, and for long had a virtual monopoly of the lower ranks in them. Now they are losing this livelihood, which they kept through decades when otherwise the public could hardly have been served.

The last few years, ever since the Sudeten trouble, have made nations very unwilling to harbour pockets of people who regard themselves as owing allegiance outside the State. The future of the community lies with the Indian people, as its wisest members realise.

But anyone who has influence with Indian leaders should use that influence to obtain generous help for this com-

munity at the outset. If its past record is any criterion it will repay generosity by the value and staunchness of its service to the State and public.

Also, Britain has a responsibility here. No man is responsible for his birth, and the wretched and blood-raddled nonsense about the superiority of the white breed, of 'Aryan' or 'Nordic' blood—all this must go, and men and women be equal in man's sight as well as in God's. And when we rebuild India in partnership with its peoples we should remember the domiciled community.

If we say we must refuse self-government in India because (1) the 'minorities' are against it: (2) we must protect the minorities, the answer is that (1) is not true and that as to (2), the 'minorities', apart from the Princes and the European business men—whom the late Secretary of State for India added as a 'minority', to Indian resentment—get no protection from us worth making a song about.

As to the Princes, have we the right to protect them against their own subjects, and to preserve the status and privileges of 120 years ago?

As to the Moslems, they need no protection from anyone.

#### CHAPTER IV

### THE PUNJAB: BENGAL: THE MARATHAS

THERE ARE THREE parts of India where Congress, or rather, its present leaders, have less hold on popular support than elsewhere.

#### THE PUNJAB

This is the one Province where Congress is at present comparatively weak. The fact is important, for the Punjab is India's garrison province and sword-arm, and most of the Indian Army is recruited there.

The Punjab is a case apart. War has been called Prussia's

national industry. The Punjab has two industries: war and agriculture.

Forty years ago, the Punjab abounded in beggar landlords; there were only 300 families with a land revenue of 500 rupees a month (£400 a year) and over. Lord Curzon's Land Alienation Act, forbidding the alienation of land to any but agricultural tribes, put the landlord in the urban money-lender's place. Also, a system of irrigation canals greatly raised the Province's prosperity. Today there are 5,432 families with a land revenue on or above the 500 rupee level.

The Punjab, then, has prospered. It has for India a high living standard. Yet the population continually overhauls this standard and pulls it down again.

I was told that in the eastern and western districts every family contained an average of one man unemployed and unemployable. If this man joins the Army he gets clothes, rations, wages, a pension; also, grants of land are made to soldiers. The headman who recruits him gets commission, and is able to point out to the beneficiary, "Through me you get all these boons!"

I think you will find, if you look into it, that every Member of the Legislative Houses elected by a rural constituency comes from one of the 5,432 families.

This kind of thing is bound to happen, in any country; it happens in ours. The Punjab is a Government of soldiers and landlords, something not unlike our own eighteenth century House of Commons.

It has been so far a good war for the Punjab, which gets the benefit of the Army contracts, the sepoys' wages, the military roads. On my plane, when I flew back from India, was an Indian student who had flown out for the Long Vacation, and was flying back to England. He asked me to guess his Province. I replied without hesitation, "The Punjab." He was astonished at my insight, and kept pressing me to tell him how I knew. It was quite simple, dear Watson (though I did not tell him so); only the son of a Punjabi could afford to fly to India and back for his summer holiday.

The Punjab last autumn was under semi-martial law, meetings were broken up and newspapers closed down. It was believed that about 150 persons, most of them Moslems, were in jail for anti-war or anti-recruiting speeches. And, if Congress is somewhat weak in the Punjab, the Moslem League won only one seat. The Ahrars, a Moslem peasant party, are shaking the League.

We cannot in 1940 enforce 'loyalty' by the methods of previous wars. Can we guarantee that this war will remain to the end a good war for the Punjab? I have tried to make this book an encouraging one, and not one which the Blimps could allege spreads despondency and defeatism. But if the reader cares to hear what happened in the Punjab in previous wars, he can get from a library my out-of-print *Reconstruction of India*, and spend a few minutes on pp. 104-112. To adapt a scriptural proverb, "If such things happened in a green tree, what will happen in a dry?" The dry season will soon be upon us.

## BENGAL

Bengal is not anti-Congress, but it is largely anti-Gandhi. Its best known Congress leader is Subashchandra Bose, now in prison. Bose recently led a revolt against Gandhi and the rest of the Congress Right.

One hears a lot in England about Congress rule being Hindu rule. Bengal has Moslem rule. The Province is smouldering in desperate unhappiness.

Elsewhere the minority is given what is called weightage—that is, representation in excess of its numerical proportion. This is given as a protection.

In Bengal, the Hindus, forty-five per cent of the population, by the Communal Award of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald were given 80 seats out of a total of 250 in the Legislature; of these ten were for the Scheduled Classes. The Moslems, the majority, whose population proportion would be 126 seats, were given 125.

At the Round Table Conference Mr. Gandhi insisted that he, and he only, spoke for the Scheduled Classes.

He "got into a bad spin", the upshot being that by the Poona Pact (1932) with Dr. Ambedkar he gave that skilful politician 30 seats in Bengal for his people. The extra seats were taken from the caste Hindus, who found themselves stripped down to 50 seats. Bengal in culture and tradition and wealth is overwhelmingly Hindu, but the Hindus have been made a depressed minority there.

The caste Hindus played their cards wretchedly from first to last. But awareness that you have done this does not lessen your misery when you realise it. And it is easy to understand why Mr. Gandhi is not popular in Bengal.

There is nothing in all India more monstrous than the block of 25 Europeans in the Legislature, giving British business the controlling hand. They have half the total representation of the caste Hindus.

#### THE MARATHAS

I have said that the Marathas are an Indian Achilles, sulking apart in their tents.

In 1784, Warren Hastings, who knew most things about India, said that the Marathas were the only people in India with a principle of nationality. That is no longer true. Other genuine nations have emerged. But the Marathas are still as clearly a nation as they ever were.

They have a record of humane and decent conduct, and they bear less of a grudge against the British than any other people. They are perhaps more strongly Hindu than any other nation in India, and have not yet forgotten their wars with the Moslems.

Strongly nationalist, they were formerly strongly pro-Congress. Today they dislike the personalities of some of the leading Congressmen. Nehru, who gives and gets hard knocks and cheerfully forgets both, in his *Autobiography* wrote things that still rankle in Maharashtra. It is my belief that he will have to go to Canossa to win back the Marathas! They dislike the powerful Gujarati element in the Congress Working Committee.

This quarrel is of recent date and could easily be set

right. It in no way affects the Maratha desire for a self-governing India, the only question that concerns this book.

## CHAPTER V

### IS INDIA FIT FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT?

#### THE CONGRESS MINISTRIES' RECORD

THE MINISTRIES HAD some difficulties of their own making. The elections had been fought half-cock, as it were; Congress had announced that it was going to try to win the elections but was not going to work the Constitution (while in its own mind, as everyone knew, it had already half decided to work them). Consequently, often it kept back its best men and fought the elections with second-raters. The Congress Working Committee, or Higher Command, as a rule kept out of the struggle.

When it formed its Ministries, therefore, they were to some extent formed of second-line leaders.

Further, we ourselves did not properly think out what responsible parliamentary government would mean. It was easy enough in the old days of autocratic rule for a Governor or Lieutenant-Governor to run a Province with perhaps three Executive Councillors and one or two near-Cabinet officials. They could issue orders and everything went to their own satisfaction. But the new Ministers have had to run offices, conduct correspondence, meet criticism and questions in the Assembly, open hospitals and schools, make speeches, tour, watch their own constituencies. The Ministers have been hard-worked (as an official—my own memory of India in the old days makes me think him unduly austere—observed to me, "There has been no tennis and tea at four o'clock for them!") One Minister in the United Provinces had twelve departments.

In Britain, for a nation of 45 millions, at the present moment we have, so far as I can make out, 27 Ministers who are considered to be of Cabinet rank, and a horde

of under-secretaries and financial secretaries. In the U.P., for a Province of 50 millions, they had six Ministers all told; in the Central Provinces four. Also, since the Central Government took the chief revenue items, the Provinces had little money.

No one is particularly to blame for these things. They were not thought out, that is all.

The Ministries did much less than the rank and file expected, and there is discontent among the peasants and artisans and the Left generally. It is not altogether a bad thing that Congress is now out of office, to look back over this first experimental period and to decide that next time it fights with its captains, not its second-lieutenants, in charge.

But of course it is nonsense to try to run vast countries on such tiny Cabinets.

There has been one very weak Congress Government, that of the C.P. But the worst Government in India, by universal consent, was *not* a Congress Government. It would be difficult for me to talk about that Government without my words being actionable. But there is no particular secret as to which Government it is. You must have British friends in India. Ask them, and you will get the right answer first time.

You will never get decently efficient politics in the C.P. (Central Provinces). It is a ramshackle Province, a fortuitous ragbag along the River Narbada and to eastward of it, whose origin was during the troubles of 1818 and 1819. It consists of two parts that can never cohere, Maharashtra (the Marathi-speaking part) and Mahakhoshal (the Hindi-speaking part). If we ever do a real job of reconstruction in India, this is one of the two most urgent tasks (the constitution of Andhra, the northern part of Madras Province, as a separate Province is the other). The Marathi-speaking part of the C.P. should go to the real Maharashtra that must one day be made, and for the time being should go to Bombay Presidency, and the Hindi-speaking part should make with Chhota Nagpur a new Province.



The Province whose Government was most generally praised was Madras. It was usual to call it "a strong Government"—Congress critics said it was liked by the British because it was so like their own type of Government. When the British Government authoritarily declared India a belligerent it was Rajagopalachari, the Premier of Madras, whose protest was the most poignantly worded. No protest made a deeper impression on the British, for of all Congress leaders he was the most Conservative. My most clean-cut memory of the Congress Working Committee at Wardha last October is of the infinitely sad face of Rajagopalachari in profile.

The U.P. and Bombay Governments were much criticised, because they made a start with Prohibition in selected areas, of which Bombay City was one. In Bombay this has had some of the bad results it had in America. Trains have been crowded out to Kalyan, where the Prohibition area ends, and there has been a great increase in people who went for sea trips. Prohibition is said, too, to have hit the Clubs hard. An old friend who is also the Bombay Government official in charge of Excise gave me lunch at the Yacht Club and asked me, "Have you got your Drink Permit?" Alas, I had no Drink Permit, and said so. "Then," he said sadly, "you will have to have a soft drink." As a matter of fact, we all of us, he and his other guest, had soft drinks. There was a man from Glasgow at the next table, holding a glass of lemonade and seeming to like it.

Also, there is good evidence that the standard of living of the poor is rising. "Drink is the quickest way out of Manchester"—and out of Bombay mills also; and this way is now closed. My friend, who ought to know, told me that it was said that the women were getting better clothes.

Many say that Prohibition is a private fad of Gandhi's; I was at one time inclined to think this. But though this might be argued of Bombay it cannot be argued of the U.P. There, in the heart of non-industrialised India, the drink revenue is drawn almost entirely from the very lowest class, it is

an excessively heavy impost laid on the poorest community. This is well brought out in a pamphlet by Dr. K. N. Katju, who was Minister in charge of Excise in the U.P.

The U.P. Government have been criticised too, because they had riots. The Congress creed is non-violence, and Congress leaders frankly admitted to me that sometimes their Governments were slow to act as vigorously as they should against breakers of the peace. This has been particularly difficult to do in the U.P., where the peace-breakers have been mostly Moslems—the Khaksar movement and the Shiah-Sunni quarrels.

#### TENANCY ACTS

It was the Governor of the United Provinces who remarked to me, many years ago, that for his part he looked forward to a Congress Government, because the land system “needs a revolution and we can never put it through”. The Congress Ministries have done something considerable for rural uplift, establishing places where good seed can be obtained and information how to use it, veterinary centres, village meeting-places, etc.

But their chief work in their brief tenure has been Tenancy Acts and Debt Reduction Acts. These have been limited in scope, by financial stringency and other factors, but already they have given the peasant a start of security such as he has not had before. They have lit a fire of hope in his mind. I accompanied Nehru on a round of village meetings held to celebrate the passing of the first stage of the U.P. Tenancy Bil', and there could be no doubt of the new spirit that had come to the villages. This first experimental assault on India's agelong evils cannot be allowed to lapse. The British officials who know most about it want the Ministries back.

#### BASIC EDUCATION

In the Central Provinces Congress made a start with Basic Education—which is sometimes called the Wardha Scheme or Gandhi's Scheme.

The present system of English education in India was established mainly because the East India Company had to reduce costs, and therefore must have a supply of Indians who understood English. We know the fun that has always been made of "babu English". Bad and absurd as babu English is, however, it is not a patch on sahib's vernacular!

Despite 'babu English', the Indian conquest of our difficult and intricate tongue is an achievement that has never been surpassed. Thousands of Indians use English which is not merely correct but idiomatic and imaginative.

Further, this English culture gave India a state of affairs that resembled that of Europe when the Middle Ages were ending—when such a man as Erasmus was a citizen of all Europe, and a cultured man was at home equally in Padua and Paris and Oxford and Heidelberg. Even into our own times, any Englishman who did not patronise India and Indians had 'the freedom' of the whole country; he could go where he liked, from Lahore to Cape Comorin, and find himself at home. It was a very great experience, and I am sorry for following generations, who can never know it.

But the worst side of this education has been appallingly bad. There have been (I daresay still are) colleges in Calcutta where education was a grisly jest: where mobs of students—so many that there was no place for them in the classrooms—stood on verandas, answering a roll-call that often took up almost the whole period. When they had answered to their own names they went home.

The end of all this was inefficiency, unemployment, misery, savage resentment—often terrorism.

Basic Education cuts down the cost of education. The scholars learn to read, write, keep accounts, and also some trade—work in cardboard, book-making, weaving. They grow their own vegetables and—since trees are far more exciting—their own trees, each child being able to have charge of his own special tree. By his or her own labour the scholar earns food while being educated, and all that

Government need provide is the buildings, the few books, and the teachers' meagre salaries.

Here, as almost all along the line, you can see what is happening in India. India is finding her own ways at last—not so much opposing her alien Government as quietly sidestepping it. She will get forward faster in this fashion.

#### INDIA'S POVERTY

Just as the sights first presented to the visitor from outside get Hinduism a bad name with the world, so the poverty of India gets us a bad name.

The visitor to Calcutta, if he has any pity in him anywhere, feels wretched at the sight of those spindly-legged wraiths drifting in the mists that rise from the Hugli.

I remember some years ago an American business man, a tourist, whom I met in Lahore. He could not get over India's misery. All he could say was: "My God! *how long* did you say you have been running this country? Is this the best you can do? I had no idea—no idea at all—when I was in America!"

A few weeks later, in the Ajanta Caves in Hyderabad State I met a famous foreign statesman. He told me that his party had been royally entertained and had been allowed to meet many charming Indian men and women. Then he asked me if I would come into the Caves again. Inside those Caves were the lovely frescoes painted in the morning of time by saffron-clad Buddhist ascetics; they show human activity with all its passion and suffering purged away. Sweeping a hand round them, the statesman said to me: "The impression these pictures give me is of a mainly happy life. Yet the impression we have everywhere received is of one seething misery from end to end. Are we right?"

When I was a young man the loveliness of India held me. I think few Englishmen know the jungles as well as I do. I wandered through them always without a gun and had the luck sometimes to meet such interesting creatures as wolves and leopards. I know its sunsets, I know its dawns, I have loved its rains.

Yet to-day I seem to be able to see only India's poverty, ignorance, misery. I simply cannot understand how as a young man I saw romance and beauty there. I feel this so strongly that I have longed to have done with India for the few years that may be left to me, and have hoped that I should never write another book about it, except some historical work. When I was in India five years ago this sense of India's unhappiness so weighed me down that Nehru wrote me a desperate letter which I found in my cabin at Bombay: "Please do not take away all this bitterness against my unhappy country!"

I felt no bitterness against India. But I did feel bitterness against the sores which cover its surface and the wretchedness with which its beauty crawls.

We ought to realise how the world feels about us and our work in India when it sees India's degradation and poverty. We give ourselves more bouquets than we deserve. We talk much of what we have done for India. It is true we have given her peace over a vast area, and this is a boon not to be underrated. But also, twice in twenty-five years she has become a belligerent in a far-off war which Iran, Siam and other countries not so lucky as to be in the British Empire have escaped. These arguments usually cut both ways. And her poverty remains dire and terrible.

I believe that India is getting steadily poorer, and that I could prove this. The problem has got beyond us, and we have got to hand it over to Indians themselves.

Indians and their present rulers do not move on the same plane of thought. The latter are thinking still of reconstruction on the old familiar lines of compromise and communal check. Indians are thinking of reconstruction from top to bottom, along the lines of an essentially peasant civilisation. One reason why Russia has been admired is its work for the peasant. Russia understands peasants, they say. The rulers of Britain, they say, have an essentially urban and industrialised outlook; they never have understood peasants or a peasant civilisation.

There is so much misery in India that it is becoming

increasingly hard for those leaders who have tried to make a settlement with us to hold discontent in check. It will be a great mistake if we think that once the magic words 'Dominion Status' are uttered we can sit back happily and assume that all is right. The next few years will be touch and go—and this is why I feel, more strongly than I can express, that we must get that settlement which can be had on such easy terms—first, to get India and Britain through this war, and then to enable our two countries to work together in a tremendous intensive effort to end such wretchedness. Unless India's poverty is handled soon and on a large scale, nothing can prevent a revolution—not less but more bloody because modern weapons might for a time shoot it down.

#### IS INDIA FIT FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT?

I do not understand what constitutes fitness for a natural right. India's neighbours, Siam, Tibet, Nepal, Iran, are independent. I suppose this is because they are more fit for self-government.

In these last years I have often wondered if the British are fit for self-government. I had the bad luck to canvass North Oxford, a region abounding in retired statesmen and public servants generally, at the first bye-election after Munich. We elected the Hon. Quintin Hogg, who has since changed his mind but was then enthusiastic about the great deliverance which had just been wrought for Britain and Czechoslovakia.

Very remarkable arguments were used in that election. "If Mr. Hogg were defeated here," pointed out Mr. Malcolm McCorquodale, Conservative M.P. for Sowerby, Yorkshire, "Herr Hitler would say, 'You may like Neville Chamberlain but he is not supported.' If Mr. Hogg wins, the story which Herr Hitler is trying to make up, that the Prime Minister is not strongly supported, could not be upheld." "We must stand by our Captain," urged another thinker, "even if he is taking the ship on to the rocks." These arguments won the day, in England's intellectual

capital, Oxford. No, I have never been able since that by-election to feel sure that Oxford is fit for self-government.

It takes some pluck, after the mess we have made of our own affairs, to tell other nations they are not fit for self-government.

We are told also, that if India gets self-government there will be jobbery, graft, nepotism.

It may be so. I have heard of these things elsewhere. You sometimes find a quite third-rate person in a high position in England, when it is hard to understand what has got him there, unless it is his family connections.

I am myself broad-minded on this question of graft. One remembers the early history of the British in India, which is perhaps the world's highwater-mark of graft; there was also the conduct of our own contemporary Parliament at home. Also, one has discussed with British officials one or two quite recent events in India; fear of the law of libel does not operate when Englishmen talk quietly together. It was possible in the winter of 1939 to hear circumstantial stories of things happening in England. One has heard of graft in the United States and the Dominions. You can have a high degree of efficient government along with a well organised system of graft.

At any rate, the Congress Ministers themselves took a vow of comparative poverty. They limited themselves to salaries of Rs. 500 a month, plus Rs. 100 house allowance and Rs. 150 car allowance—Rs. 750 in all, in place of the high salaries of their predecessors. They have made it embarrassing to govern after them.

The Congress Ministries found that the tradition of helpfulness of the Civil Service in England existed in the Civil Service of India also. Both sides were sorry when the Ministries went last October. Two and a half years of limited self-government, under the shadow of marching Armageddon, has been precious little time to touch India's poverty, a problem which the British could not solve in many years of power. But this brief period was marked by courtesy and friendliness.

## CHAPTER VI

CAN BRITAIN AND INDIA  
CO-OPERATE?

IN BENGAL, AN unpopular Ministry is kept in office by the support of a large block of British representatives in the Legislature—half the number of those allotted to the whole of the caste Hindu community. The resentment this arouses is hard to exaggerate.

Remember the totalitarian nature of modern big business. This was the way the Managing Director of one of the largest businesses talked. "Then I started our own printing press, and cut out the money we used to pay to an Indian firm. Then we started our own paper-making outfit, and cut out *that* expense." And so on.

In the old days, when a British firm opened there were pickings, and small Indian businesses had reason to welcome it. Now there is nothing for them. The British firm becomes an *imperium in imperio*, shut in and sealed; and presently its own subsidiary businesses sally out as from a fortress, and cut out and ruin the small Indian firms that were doing business before the British people came.

By what right do we demand big representation in Indian Legislatures to safeguard our profits? Is it worth while?

Use your eyes when going over an Indian factory. See where the machinery was made. Is it not in Germany and the United States? For this, resentment is largely responsible. Cut out your unjustifiable hold on the Legislatures and it will be easy privately to make far more profitable arrangements for yourselves.

For—I repeat—Indians like us better than other foreigners. In one way or another we have been three centuries in India, and even our quarrel with Indian Nationalists has some of the aspects of a family quarrel.



When this war ends, even after its colossal cost and destruction we shall still be a rich nation, rich in resources and potentialities, in experience. The late T. E. Lawrence once compared us to an old firm which can offer unique advantages to younger firms in partnership with it. He wanted Iraq, Egypt, to be such younger firms.

In India are none of the superb public benefactions that we have: she has no Rhodes Trust, no Pilgrim Trust, no Leverhulme Trust. America is still better off than Britain is.

It is not by large and indiscriminate charity, but by the work of key men and women, that mankind moves forward. These key men and women exist all over India: people who have discovered a line worth following up, a thing worth doing. A Trust which three or four persons who knew something and would take trouble would administer, as wisely and ably as the Trusts I have mentioned are administered—from which a grant of Rs. 500 could be made to this man or cause, one of Rs. 10,000 to that man—in a very few years could advance India immeasurably, in hope and in achievement. Is it impossible that after this war we should establish a Pilgrim Fund for India? She has done a great deal for us, and her dead have lain on our battlefields. Can we not do something for her? Here is a way of self-respect for all parties.

There is no limit to the gracious and imaginative co-operation which the post-war world can see between India and Britain. No one need worry that a self-governing India will want to leave the Empire. Why should she? She likes our people whenever we give Indians a chance to like us, and it is not possible not to like and admire Indians if you know them. And we are a good people to have as comrades.

PART THREE

THE LINES OF A SOLUTION

CHAPTER I

THE CARDS WHICH CONGRESS  
HOLDS

**I**F CONGRESS HAD wanted to embarrass us they held all the cards, as they well knew. They could have ravaged our relations with the United States of America: and they could have split our war effort in India from top to bottom.

For the first six months of the war and longer, the Nazi broadcasts to the United States largely concentrated on India. I was shown one of these broadcasts and was surprised to find it so good. It left out all that was to Britain's credit, but it was accurate, so far as it went; and it was circumstantial and 'factual', it gave dates and actual quotes—"Lord Halifax said", "Mr. Winston Churchill said". Many if not most Americans believe that India has never had any self-government except mere eyewash, and would be astonished if they knew the very real extent to which the Provinces a year ago controlled their own affairs. It would be easy to clean up these broadcasts and their effect if our own Government made a settlement and got the Ministries back and got India on our side. Suppose that Gandhi or Nehru could come to the microphone! But until this can be done Lord Haw-Haw has the game in his hands—because of this plain and undeniable truth, that India is now most of it under autocratic rule.

Every time one of our statesmen comes across with the usual fine-sounding sentences about our fighting for "democracy" and "the freedom of all people", every

listener outside our own island mentally murmurs "India". In the United States Gandhi and Nehru (who have neither of them ever been there) are men tremendously admired, Gandhi indeed admired by many hardly on this side of idolatry. The anti-British propaganda is vocal and admirably organised. Having faced anti-British crowds in the largest halls of such cities as Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, with women distributing anti-British leaflets outside at the doors, I know something about this.

The point is, we are in the wrong over this declaring India a belligerent. And the point is also, the war is not yet finished and it must be won and won at the first moment possible.

But Congress have *not* exploited their chance against us. They know we are fighting civilisation's battle. They have watched this battle deepening in grimness, all the time hoping to see it change into a genuine people's war—waged by the people through the people's own representatives and for the people. During the Dunkirk battle Nehru, to men who pressed for civil disobedience, said that to launch it in Britain's peril would be an act "derogatory to India's honour". That was an act of high chivalry.

Not only have Congress leaders treated us better than we deserve. India as a whole has been magnanimous towards us. The poet Rabindranath Tagore felt passionately our authoritarian manner of putting his country to war; he wrote desperately in protest, in *The Modern Review*, India's most widely read monthly. No one in New Delhi or Whitehall seemed to have noticed what he said, and surprise was expressed when I showed his writings.

Yet, when M. Reynaud sent his last-minute cry for help to President Roosevelt, Tagore put aside his own suffering and indignation and sent his own cable of fervent appeal in support. He knew well how this action by an Indian would strike American opinion. He has always been a supremely magnanimous man, but in his eighty years he never did anything nobler.

We are very lucky to have had at the head of the Congress men who cared supremely for ethical issues, and put them even above patriotism. There has been statesmanship there all along, waiting until we could produce statesmanship here to answer it and work with it.

What about the Army? I have said that if Congress had wanted to embarrass us it could have done this here.

The sepoy comes from the villages, and the villages are where Congress is strongest, even in the Punjab, the one Province where Congress is comparatively weak. There is no bother about recruiting now, because there is so much unemployment. "I could get you as many recruits as you wanted at eight rupees a head," remarked a Bombay business man who has been all his life in India, "and I could make a profit for myself of two rupees a head." Yes, but war at the recruiting office and war under the actual stress of modern methods are two very different things.

Modern total war strains both mind and body. It can be supported only by free men. The Germans do not put their Czechs or Italians into it.

In 1916, four months after the Easter Rebellion in Dublin, I remember our R.C. padre one day entering my forty-pounder beside the Tigris and flinging himself down exhausted and discouraged. "Do you mind if I talk to you for a bit?" he asked. "My officers would not understand me and I must talk to someone." He told me that his Irish troops were in a ferment because of news and rumour coming with their letters from home. I was in India when "Easter slew Connolly's men" and knew very little about it, but he opened my eyes. He told me the worst disquiet was in The Connaught Rangers, a gallant regiment I knew and greatly admired. The sequel of all this suppressed unhappiness came in 1920, when the Rangers mutinied in India, and one of the mutineers was executed and others sentenced and the regiment was disbanded. I think I am right in saying that this was the first execution in India in peace time for any offence other than murder

since the 'sixties of last century. You never heard about this? Perhaps not. But ask someone who knew The Connaught Rangers, and learn how deep was the feeling over this pitifully mismanaged business.

If you are going to wage modern total war successfully you must have happiness in the soldiers' homes.

Last autumn we all of us had the most fantastic misconceptions concerning this war. Now we begin to know better. But do we know all that we are destined to know? Can anyone guarantee that nothing more will happen to chequer our course to victory?

Mr. Winston Churchill has told us that from the Dominions he gets the most enheartening, the most moving, messages. No such messages can come from India. Her natural leaders cannot go to the microphone—its use is debarred to them. Shankar, "the David Low of India", a very good cartoonist whose work is looked for eagerly by British as well as Indians, last October drew an almost cruel picture of Empire Unity: the statesmen of the Dominions which were allowed to speak for themselves standing erect and beating drums, and beside them a figure dangling by strings over a wall, and its puppet hands feebly hitting the sticks as the unseen will directed. The cartoon's justice was admitted while its cleverness was admired and deplored.

Only yesmen and British-appointed officials can now come to the microphone. Those Indians whose fame has gone out to all lands must stay at a distance. Imagine what it would be like if we were in India's place. If Mr. Churchill and Mr. Priestley could never speak for us, and if no one whose standing was higher than that of one of our less known Under-Secretaries of State could come to the microphone—to speak for Britain!

Remember what has happened since this year began in such deceptive quietness. Since Italy entered the war you know the possibilities.

To clean up a tiny isolated post held by Italian native troops—to raid a desert convoy—any Power can use *askaris*.

But for modern total war—with its terrific strain on mind and spirit—only free men can serve. We are asking from India the superb assistance which the Dominions give so freely and nobly; her Army is being vastly increased (which means, incidentally, that it must be recruited from a wider area and the Punjab proportion must shrink), her resources are being organised for modern total war.

Why do we not offer to the land from which we want a Dominion's giant service a Dominion's status?

But the Viceroy *has* made offers we are told. Yes: if Indian leaders will only acquiesce in the continuance of the present Dublin Castle system of ruling India the Viceroy's Council can be enlarged, and some of them can be nominated to join it. If all that Nehru, for example, wants is to get two or three extra jobs for Indians—instead of the right to speak for their own affairs—he can have them. So can Jinnah, if that is what the Moslem League is fighting for.

But the whole Indian system is long ago ramshackle and out of date. As I have said before—and I mean to drive it in—in India we are waging the war of 1940 on a 1914 basis.

Some people cannot see danger even when it is plain as a pikestaff and as tall as a church tower. If I have intelligent readers who can read between the lines they can see for themselves how full of peril is the course which we have chosen to pursue in India.

## CHAPTER II

### WHAT DOES INDIA WANT?

#### INDEPENDENCE

WE ARE TOLD, "But Congress asks Independence."

The Moslem League too (no one ever mentions this) has as its official creed—Independence.

Last October, Mr. Mahomed Muzzaffar, Publicity Officer of the Cawnpur Muslim League, wrote:

"On October 18, 1937, at the Muslim League session in Lucknow we passed the famous resolution of complete independence . . .

"When we say that we want full independence we honestly mean it. We want India to be free and want that freedom enjoyed by every community. Our quarrel with the Congress has been with regard to the correct use of political power which is coming into Indian hands. We want that power to be used impartially and not to the detriment of the Musalmans.

"But although that quarrel has been serious enough it must not be interpreted to mean, as is sometimes done, that we can ever oppose political progress. Muslim public opinion is solidly in favour of full freedom as will be apparent when the time comes. Their quarrel with the Congress is a domestic matter and must not be used as an argument by British imperialists to block political advance. If this is done disillusionment must follow.

"I am convinced that Britain will commit a grievous mistake if she takes refuge behind any such excuses and fails to do justice towards India.

"Throughout the Muslim world Islam stands for liberty and freedom. Love of freedom is ingrained in a Musalman and he could neither be intimidated nor be manœuvred into saying, 'Let me and my countrymen remain slaves. I would prefer slavery to freedom.'"

There is a firm belief in many circles in India and in this country, that by an alliance, even if only a secret alliance, with the Moslems we can escape India's demand for Independence. We can not. But we can escape it—and keep India's Imperial Connection—by common sense and by action dictated by common sense.

Sir Stanley Reed, a Conservative M.P. with a long experience of India, has said that he is not frightened of the word Independence. Of course not. In an ideal

world every nation should have every kind of independence, actual *and* formal, that it desires. But we are not living in an ideal world and Indian leaders know this as well as we know it. We must get behind the word 'Independence' and find out what they really desire.

#### WHAT INDIA WANTS

India wants three things, and is sure that she is right in wanting them.

1. Never again to be told she is at war because of another country's actions and choice and policy. Do not underestimate the depth and extent of this feeling. It is not felt by Congressmen only; it is felt by Moslems, Sikhs, Parsees, Christians, Scheduled Classes—by Indian Liberals and Moderates no less than by 'Extremists'—by everyone almost, who has reached a sufficient level of education and political awareness to be able to look above the mere daily struggle for necessary food.

On August 20, 1917, H.M. Government laid down as their policy in India: "the gradual development of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". "The natural issue of India's progress as there contemplated", said Lord Halifax, the Viceroy, in 1929, referring to the Act of 1919 which put the 1917 Declaration into practice, "is the attainment of Dominion Status".

In the intervening years, while British statesmen and journals have wrangled about the precise kind of Dominion Status that could some day be granted to India and while some who had formerly expressed their approval of the Declaration (for example, Mr. Winston Churchill) changed their minds, Dominion Status came more and more to seem like a carrot always held a few inches in front of the nose of a gradually flagging and extremely discouraged donkey. But let us return to the close of the former war.

When the 1914-1918 war ended and the Act of 1919 established India's new Constitution, there was a widespread feeling that India had been cheated and given a



shabby deal. That feeling has deepened ever since. "Every Indian, I do not care who he is," said a British business man to me last October, "has this feeling: 'We trusted you and you let us down last time. Now pay your debts before you run up another account'."

Last September, if the question of India's participation in the war had been formally left to the Legislative Assemblies, they would have come in enthusiastically and unconditionally, with the support of the Congress and the Muslim League. The 'unconditionally' may be open to question, but it is my conviction.

Or—if the Viceroy, on behalf of the British Government, had made a statement of war aims and had given a pledge of Dominion Status, to be implemented at the end of the war, there would have been a settlement of the dispute last October.

Nevertheless, Indians understand our position and know the sort of Government we had. If we now act as a people with new hopes, new aims, and under a new set of rulers, they will say: "Never mind about what is past! We are starting a fresh chapter in human history!"

2. India means to have a Constitution chosen by her own representatives.

The Chinese Ambassador's observation that the air was "dark with the wings of chickens flying home" has been often quoted. Let us have the common sense and sense of humour to admit it, and to admit that they have been flying home in India as well as in Europe. We have all of us talked far too much about the immorality of "dictated treaties". Many have justified almost all that Italy and Germany have done, because of the dictated Treaty of Versailles.

India has a 'dictated' Constitution, and means to get rid of it.

Last autumn Congress pressed for "a Constituent Assembly"—a body chosen by every adult Indian everywhere—to make the new Constitution. There was much misunderstanding and doubt about this.

It was mainly Nehru's idea. Nehru is one of the very few people who really believe in hundred-per-cent democracy, in consulting every man and woman. Gandhi said that at first he did not accept the plan but that he had not merely come over to it, he had become more enthusiastic than Nehru himself.

It may be so, but I could not feel sure. When Gandhi wants to make his meaning clear he commands the most pellucid English imaginable, but there are other occasions when he is the perfect human cuttlefish. I read his article on a Constituent Assembly carefully and failed to see what he meant. Now English happens to be my native tongue. Gandhi has said that he is willing to be persuaded to some other plan.

However, one way or another, Indians mean to get their own Constitution. They consider that they understand their own affairs better than we understand them, and that 400 millions have the right to overhaul these affairs at a faster rate than during the last century. They do not think that a far-off country living under the menaces of the last few years has either the time or the knowledge to run them. If Indian Big Business (as some predict) should have too much say, they consider that is "their own funeral" and that they can handle it better than we can; Indian Big Business has plenty of say under the present Constitution, and some people have imagined that British Big Business has a considerable say in our own democratic country (as Herr Thyssen and others had in Nazi Germany).

3. Indians demand to know our war aims. For a long time all that British statesmen would say (to us, as well as to India) was that our only aim was to win the war and that this should be sufficient for everybody.

Well, we have decided that it was not sufficient for us. Now it is freely and often admitted that we are fighting also to create a new and nobler Britain, with people released from the immemorial terror of unemployment and helplessness. Why can we not tell India—whose sons we are asking to fight beside us—that we are fighting

to bring into existence a new India also? We are fighting to create a new Europe. But we happen to have an Empire, which during our years of preoccupation with Europe's affairs has been sinking rapidly into one vast 'slum' (the word is that of *The Evening Standard* last autumn, so I am not being seditious or causing feelings of defeatism and disunity in using it—the word is quite all right).

I quote again Nehru's words: "We are not going to be committed to an unknown and dangerous adventure, unless we know what we are fighting for."

"But they have no right," said a Cabinet Minister to me, "to demand to settle our war aims." Of course not—as he understood (or, rather, misunderstood) me and them. Indians did *not* mean, and do not mean now, war aims as our politicians and the French politicians meant them last autumn: the possible dismemberment of Germany, France taking the left bank of the Rhine, Hapsburgs or Hohenzollerns returning. These aims in no way interested them, except in so far as their careless divulgement might prolong this war. "We have to consult France", the Minister reminded me, thinking of such aims as this. We do not have to consult France so much now.

What Indians want is some statement that will make the war a *reality* to India. We are dealing with an emotional and imaginative people, who long passionately to feel that they are with us as comrades and colleagues, in an effort that is really going to bring mankind—and not Europe only—more happiness and more justice than ever before. The *status quo* during the last half-dozen years was a nightmare.

### CHAPTER III

## CAN WE RETRIEVE A LOST CHANCE?

**I**S THERE A solution?

There is. If we are going to ask India to act beside us as our Dominions do, make her by resolution of Parliament

a Dominion now in status, and as far as possible implement this resolution now.

Something on the lines of the following statement represents more or less what I feel myself and believe many other English, Scots, and Welsh feel:

“H.M. Government pledges itself to the establishment of Dominion Status in British India at the conclusion of the war, subject only to limitations that shall be agreed on between its own representatives and representatives accepted by Indian opinion as its spokesmen. Before stating the general character of these limitations, H.M. Government wishes to say explicitly that they would be recognised as of a temporary and transitional character only, and that the Dominion Status now promised would include, without any reservations whatever: (1) complete control by India's elected representatives of India's foreign policy and of her attitude towards any future wars that may arise; (2) the making of a Constitution which would be in no sense an imposed one, but would be one made by Indian representatives themselves.

“His Majesty's Government is unable to accept the demand made by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress, that India be now declared an Independent Nation, or its other demand, that in the making of the Constitution the British Government should take no part. Political and personal connections of so long standing, and considerations involving hundreds of millions and problems of extreme and perhaps unique perplexity, rule out any such peremptory and one-sided settlement. The connection between the British people and the people of India is now of over three centuries' standing, and so long a period has not gone by without creating a sentiment, which is certainly strong in the British people and, we believe, strong in the Indian people also, which in innumerable instances has risen into personal friendship between individuals of our peoples.

We do not believe that either the necessity or the desire exists, that India should leave the British Commonwealth of Nations, and that Indians should cease to be our fellow-citizens of this Commonwealth. It would be with profound sorrow that the British people brought themselves to accept such a severance. It has been the hope of many of the best men and women of both peoples that our nations would find a civilised and friendly relationship, that would make the times of estrangement of solely historical interest. If such a relationship can be established, it will be a great moral victory for all mankind, the first example in all history of races divided by the space of 'East' and 'West' coming to acceptance of their necessity to each other. And failure to achieve this will be a moral failure, at a time when the whole world can little afford a moral failure of such magnitude. It is in the light of these considerations that we ask the Indian people to examine what remains to be said; and we ask them to put the best and friendliest construction on even what seems to them at first glance to be mistaken.

"It is not possible for H.M. Government, or for any British political party, to accept the demand that India be declared an Independent Nation. We believe that the common judgment of all the world will agree that no Government should be asked to make such a declaration in the midst of a gigantic struggle. Independence, as the word has hitherto been construed, has been achieved only in one of three ways: (1) by victory in war, which cannot be the aim of a political party whose creed is one of non-violence; also, there has been no war between our peoples, and we are convinced that no war will arise; (2) by long possession of practical Independence which makes the final severance of all political connection a matter of mere expediency or sentiment; (3) by the presentation of a practically unanimous demand, from one nation to another. Of these three methods, the second is the one that has become the practice of

the British Commonwealth of Nations; and when membership of a Commonwealth ensures and defends, by the might and resources of all being at the disposal of each, the full possession of freedom, neither expediency nor sentiment is likely ever to demand the severance of the political connection.

"The reasons which forbid the declaration that India is an Independent Nation make impossible also the consent of H.M. Government to the demand that they take no share in the making of India's Constitution. These reasons are well known to all the world, and can be briefly stated; they come under three heads.

"1. The Communal Problem. When H.M. Government state their opinion that any settlement for India's future government must include a settlement of this, they merely state a fact that Indians of all schools of political thought have explicitly and frequently and in recent days admitted. Nevertheless, H.M. Government expresses its conviction that the communal problem is no longer any bar to full Dominion Status, and its conviction that its settlement is not merely in the interests of the Indian people but is well within their power. If H.M. Government were to attempt to use this problem, as its critics assert it does, in order to 'divide and rule' and so perpetuate a continuance of India's political subordination, Indians would be guilty both of political ineptitude in the first degree and of want of patriotism if they permitted such an effort to succeed. H.M. Government therefore, as one of the parties long concerned in India's problems, will offer their good will and services in bringing about a settlement which they firmly believe the Indian people desire.

"2. The Native States. H.M. Government have their treaty obligations with Indian Rulers, and while these are no justification for the eternity of the conditions that obtained when those treaties were made H.M. Government cannot in honour throw down these obligations, and as one of the two parties to them must

be present when they come up, as they will come up, for discussion. It is not in the traditions or practice of the British people to enter into unilateral repudiation of solemn treaty engagements, and we believe that neither our friends nor our enemies expect us to do so now. The Indian nation of the near future can conceivably consist of the people of British India alone. But it is on every ground desirable that there should be a federation of both British India and the Native States, and H.M. Government, as the friend of both parties, has a right to observe and a service to render.

"3. Defence. This, in the judgment of H.M. Government, is the most difficult of these three problems. Yet with good will on both sides and a resolution to recognise the facts we believe it is capable of solution.

"In the world, as we unfortunately know it, Defence is a real problem. It is not in Europe only that lawless aggression has spread devastation and darkened the lives of the nations. The British Commonwealth of Nations is a power whose existence is regarded without fear by the peace-loving nations, and whose disappearance would be received by them with dismay and sorrow. Threatening the liberties of none, it offers the strong shield of its united strength to the nations who live within its borders, and of those nations India is one.

"It would be no solution of this problem if the British Government were to declare India an Independent Nation and—the logical result of such a declaration—withdraw its armed forces of every kind and leave India to build up, hastily and precariously, defences of her own. Yet we believe firmly that the problems of Indian Defence, both external and internal, can be handled by our peoples in equal consultation, without any derogation from either the dignity or the full freedom of the Indian people. The British Commonwealth of Nations did not come into existence yesterday, and it has had a long experience in dealing with such problems as this. As the history of those self-governing

Dominions whose existence is the achievement of one Empire, and of one Empire only, shows, it has repeatedly happened that Great Britain, with the full consent and approval of the Dominion concerned, has continued through a period of transition to keep in its borders armed forces of some kind or another, while the Dominion has built up its own defences.

"The demand has been made for a Constituent Assembly, elected on the widest possible franchise. H.M. Government recognise the democratic feeling that has given rise to this demand. On the other hand, there are practical difficulties, which are felt not only in Great Britain and British Government circles, and a great deal of obscurity hangs over this question. Mr. Gandhi himself has said explicitly that if a better solution can be found he will accept it. H.M. Government for their part reciprocate this willingness to be convinced to accept what is not their proposal, if reason can be shown to be sufficient. Meanwhile, they propose to enter into informal discussions and exploration of what, after all, is merely a method and involves no principle, and they propose to take consultation with the leaders of the principal parties and groups of India. It should be enough if they affirm now that, whatever the method, the Constitution of India will be one that public opinion will recognise to be not merely just, but one made by their own true representatives.

"There remains the question of war aims. The primary war aim is to demonstrate that aggression will not be tolerated and that force is to come to an end as a means of settling disputes between nations—as it long ago came to an end as a means of settling them between individuals. This, however, though essential as the first step, is a negative war aim, and suggests that H.M. Government and the British people would be satisfied to return to the state of affairs out of which the war arose.



"That is far from being the case. H.M. Government recognise that if the British Empire is to continue to exist its peoples must feel that freedom is the gift that membership of the Empire holds for them. It pledges itself, on behalf of the British people, to an earnest and sustained effort, when the war has ended, to bring about a higher standard of living and happiness and enlightenment than the world has known. The war comes as a profoundly disquieting symptom, to show that armed strength and material resources are not enough. When it has ended, though with resources depleted the British people will still be a great people, will still command immense resources, both material and spiritual, and they now ask the Indian people to believe that they realise that a great task of reconstruction awaits them and us. We ask the Indian people to look on themselves as our colleagues and comrades, in the restoration and rebuilding of human faith, human hope, happiness of every kind."

But there is really no need for any statement as long as that—though I believe it contains the things that India longs to hear us say.

Here is my practical suggestion. First, let the Ministries return, not as Congress Ministries but as frankly Coalition Ministries for the duration of the War. Let them return greatly enlarged in numbers, so that there may be room for Moslem League Ministers and other Ministers of other than the party electorally victorious. As Coalitions for the duration of this war. If this is done much of the Hindu-Moslem bitterness will vanish. There are other Moslem League leaders besides the seemingly intransigent ones, and with them a settlement is possible, to which they could persuade their colleagues.

Working together in so great an effort for all mankind the leaders and communities would come closer together in every way, and after the war it will take time to work out the new Constitution and meanwhile this and that

separate problem can be examined at some leisure and privately.

We are told that the Moslems will run out if we say Dominion Status and give a definite date. I do not believe it. Why does Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, for example, pledge his own credit that India will get Dominion Status when the war ends?

Are we going to throw him over when the war ends? Nothing can prevent us saying Dominion Status then—when it will come ungraciously and give no pleasure and may be rejected. Nor will our nation have either the mood or the means to coerce India when this war has ended. Why not say the words now, when they will have value in every way? No doubt Dominion Status for India holds dangers and difficulties. But what other course is there which does not hold far worse ones?

As to the Princes, is India for ever to be kept in the political strait-jacket made for her in 1819? In 1819 Napoleon was still alive, and many who had fought in the American Revolution were living. We are told that the Princes will not enter Federation if India is given Dominion Status. But at the time of the Round Table Conference, the Maharaja of Bikaner said that the Princes would federate “only with a free India”.

They may have changed their minds since, and be against a free India now. Nevertheless, their people want a free India—not only as regards British India but Native India also. In 1940 the people should count.

Are these Princes so much greater persons than our own King or the President of the United States? Is there any reason why they should not—in 1940—brace themselves to endure the climate of constitutional representative government, in place of autocratic rule under the eye of British Political Officers?

What an amazing chance we lost last autumn! The Indian Nationalist Movement was built up on the idea of Non-Violence, an idea powerfully calling out the sympathy of the outside world. Mr. Gandhi is still one

of the world's few utter pacifists: to him war is unthinkable. Yet we all but won this Movement, *and* Mr. Gandhi, over to enthusiastic support in a war—the very acme of all the violence that can be! If we had, it would have been a tremendous moral victory in the sight of all mankind. At one stroke Abyssinia, Munich, Tientsin, would have been made to seem comparatively trivial and unimportant.

If we now could make India a willing partner in a war that is a reality to Indian opinion and touches its imagination, we should lift the whole war on to what it still largely lacks, an emotional level, and at one stroke we could make ourselves plainly the moral leaders of the world.

With India enthusiastically on our side, our Far Eastern flank grows safer. We can stand up to Japan, we shall need no more such pitiful subterfuges as the closing of the Burma-China road “for three months only”, in order to give aggressor and aggressed a chance to come to a settlement “just towards them both”.

But it is the moral victory that I would stress.

Will the offer of Dominion Status be accepted?

Yes. Possibly not without the delay of a few days. But it will be accepted.

I know well how the younger Congressmen and younger Moslems press for stronger fiercer action. It may be that even Gandhi cannot much longer deliver the goods: the Congress Working Committee are assailed and abused as belonging “to the right”. But there are Indians and British of all parties and creeds who between them can assemble an immense influence which, joined to India's passionate longing for peace within herself and with us and to be in this fight as our comrades, will win acceptance. I have no doubts as regards the Congress (and I have talked with Congressmen of the Left, with a frankness that felt no necessity for reserves of any kind). There are men who can speak for and to the Moslem leaders, and to the Marathas and Scheduled Classes and any other party that may be concerned as a unity.

Best and most effective of all, the common longing of all India will make its wishes known.

The times are propitious. A few weeks ago Charlie Andrews died, and Gandhi wrote:

I want Englishmen and Indians, whilst the memory of the death of this servant of England and India is still fresh, to give a thought to the legacy he has left for us both. There is no doubt about his love for England being equal to that of the tallest of Englishmen, nor can there be any doubt of his love for India being equal to that of the tallest of Indians. . . . At the present moment I do not wish to think of English misdeeds. They will be forgotten, but not one of the heroic deeds of Andrews will be forgotten so long as England and India live. It is possible, quite possible, for the best Englishmen and the best Indians to meet together and never to separate till they have evolved a formula acceptable to both. The legacy left by Andrews is worth the effort."

#### CHAPTER IV

#### WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NOW?

YESTERDAY THE WORLD was dotted, and Europe in particular, with nominally independent countries. Where is their independence today?

Only British sea-power kept Norway, Holland, Belgium, France even, independent. The last year has proved the necessity of the British Empire as the world is now. We are the only nation that by God's grace can and will restore small nations to freedom. Canada, which is a Dominion, is independent. Eire, which is neutral, is in deadly peril and would be far safer if she were in alliance with us.

Dominion Status—citizenship of the British Empire—seemed no such tremendous matter to make a song about,

when mysterious 'pirates' were submarining our vessels in the Mediterranean and we pretended that we were at a loss to guess who could be doing it, when Franco was bombing our merchantmen, when the Japanese were stripping our people in front of grinning crowds at Tientsin and had machine-gunned an Ambassador. We did not seem a conspicuously good people to go tiger-hunting with.

After Munich I spent a night with three American newspaper men just back from Prague. They had no conception of the depths of humiliation and misery in the Englishman with them; their country was on the sidelines. They kept on saying, "You are licked, and the whole world knows it! You are yellow, and the whole world knows it!"

Today all that is changed. We are neither licked nor yellow, and Munich is a thousand years ago. Our superb airmen and seamen and fishermen and merchant sailors and soldiers are acting with a swift and selfless valour at which men living long after the grass is growing through our brains will marvel. Generations unborn will wish they had lived in our time and as our comrades, as men and women have wished that they could have lived in the Athens of Themistocles or the England of Drake. Dunkirk has cleansed away utterly the tarnish that had settled on citizenship of our Empire. But there is still one flaw in our moral armour.

If the war had gone for us triumphantly, today Gandhi would be engaged in a fast to the death to obtain India's rights, and selected Indian leaders, men and women whose names counted far outside India, would be in civil disobedience and in our jails.

But they are not the men and women to bring us down in a struggle where all their sympathies are with us. "So far as the British are concerned," Gandhi writes (June 1, 1940) and has written repeatedly, "I have already said that I will do nothing to embarrass them. . . . They are a brave and proud people. They are not going to be demoralised by even half a dozen such setbacks" (as the

Battle of Flanders). "They are well able to cope with any difficulty that may face them."

But, he adds, "India has no say whatsoever in the manner in which she is to take her part in the war. She was dragged into the war by the mere wish of the British Cabinet. Her resources are being utilised at the will of the British Cabinet. India is a dependency and Britain will drain the dependency dry as she has done in the past. What gesture has the Congress to make in these circumstances? The greatest gesture in its power the Congress is already making. It creates no trouble in the country. It refrains, in pursuance of its own policy. I have said and I repeat that I shall do nothing wilfully to embarrass Britain. . . . Beyond this it is not in the power of the Congress to go."

There is great admiration in India for our Premier, and not one scrap of resentment for the fact that formerly he was the foremost opponent of any extension of self-government to India. It is recognised that like everyone else he has his blind spot, and that his impressions of India were formed during his short stay there as a cavalry subaltern, forty years ago. Perhaps he will remember the School Song of his own School (and Jawaharlal Nehru's), Harrow, which begins "Forty years on" and envisages the possibility that in forty years a man may grow and change?

We know how tremendous he is in debate, how hard to answer. The only time I ever saw him disconcerted was when he was talking on India and twitted Sir Austen Chamberlain with having changed his mind, not only on India but on Ireland. When he rose to reply, Sir Austen said very simply: "It is true, I did change my mind about Ireland. I did it because I came to the conclusion that I had been mistaken." It is not often that a statesman feels he can afford to make this admission, and when he does make it it comes so devastatingly that for a moment it almost looks as if he had hit below the belt and had been using most unparliamentary methods.

Mr. Winston Churchill's courage in fighting against a disastrous foreign policy—when the former Premier

sneered that among his great qualities judgement has never been conspicuous—and in fighting for a Ministry of Supply when what Miss Rebecca West has called our 'trained seals' laughed at this as "Churchill's private stunt" has been watched in India with boundless admiration. And his word is trusted absolutely.

You read in your newspapers from time to time that Mr. Gandhi or Mr. Jinnah are again in discussions with the Viceroy. They have been in these discussions off and on for nearly twenty years. It is a technique as outworn as everything else in the Indian Government's manner of waging this war.

It serves one purpose only: between them, Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah, with our assistance, have imposed on India a long stalemate. That stalemate will last until their deaths—as affairs are now managed. It would end swiftly if the two of them were put in a room with no British present, but with a score of other Indians, Moslem and Hindu together. There are occasions when only Indians can talk to Indians effectively. You need Jinnah and Gandhi "in solution", as an Indian friend puts it. There is too much of the Führer in them both. Why should this matter of Hindu-Moslem relations be always treated as a matter just between these two men and the Viceroy?

And on our part there is a technique that has never been tried. Mr. Churchill cannot escape his own greatness. He stands at the bar of history and of all time, in a manner that no other living European statesman stands there (you may want to add, "Except Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini"—but as regards them I believe decision has already gone and will only be ratified by those generations that follow us). If he cannot win the war and cannot win India and prove himself the Empire's rebuilder, no other man can.

If he would speak to India in his own imaginative and powerful and deeply personal fashion and would offer Dominion Status, not as a 'concession' but as an invitation which brave men simply could not resist, to come to our

side as our comrades in the greatest adventure since the Greeks drove back Persia—there would be a response that would be a trumpet call through every nation.

It would be said of him also:

“For thy brother’s sake,  
That lay in bonds, thou blew’st a blast as bold  
As that wherewith the heart of Roland brake—  
Far heard across the New World and the Old!”

## CHAPTER V

### POSTSCRIPT—THE VICEROY’S LATEST OFFER

**As I PASS** proofs, the Viceroy (Aug. 8) announces that he is going ahead with last October’s rejected offers: to add Indian leaders to his Council and to form that group “which will more closely associate Indian opinion with the conduct of the war”. Mr. Amery has urged Indians (Aug. 14) to co-operate and to start now to work out the Constitution they want. The implication is almost (but not quite) that an agreed Constitution would be accepted by us. There is good and bad in all this—the bad so unessential that it must not be allowed to sink the good.

Dominion Status is reaffirmed as our goal. You must know Indians, to realise what exasperation has gathered round this phrase. It should be uttered never again but once—when the pledge is implemented.

Our motives are plain, which is honest. We cannot handle Italy in Egypt and on the Red Sea without India’s help.

But Indians, like ourselves, keep in abeyance at the back of their minds certain questions. Though they have no illusions as to what an Axis Victory would mean, we, and not they, ate the sour grapes by which their teeth are to be set on edge. Something frank and trustful would befit our



greatness as a nation, to bring India in to what began as our war.

It asks much of Indians with reputations for patriotism and disinterestedness to lose, to accept high office unless they know clearly our post-war plans. It will not help if the new Councillors have to come from bigoted communalists, who merely desire to dig their group in at the centre: careerists, of whom India has plenty: or those so weary of the long struggle that they would make peace on any terms and trust to find us in a good mood later.

If the Viceroy goes ahead with support that sums up to an electoral minority, it is hard to see how Congress leaders can much longer prevent Civil Disobedience. Repression would complicate our problem when American pity presently urges us to let in food to a starving Europe. The Empire War Council would meet at New Delhi next October with India in revolt behind a façade of loyalty. Mr. Gandhi cables (Aug. 13): "Britain cannot claim to stand for justice if she fails to be just to India. India's disease is too deep to yield to any make-believe or half-hearted measures."

One sentence wrecks our offer, Government's "concern that full weight should be given to the views of minorities in any revision" of the Constitution. What does this mean?

"It goes without saying that they could not contemplate transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life."

That grants a veto, without visible term, to the 'minorities', and proposes to set up in India permanent "Fifth Columns". Incidentally it asks Congress, who represent an overwhelming majority of the electorate and as it expands will represent still more, to admit tacitly what they strenuously deny, that in their brief tenure of provincial power they have been "unduly unfair to the minorities".

No patriot anywhere would accept 'self-government' with this comprehensive veto tagged to its tail.

Ten years ago, by accident I found myself defending "England" on American platforms. I was invited to meet the editorial board of a journal consistently unfair to us. The Editor was disarmingly frank. "We have a simple rule, that whatever the British do is from wrong motives. Of course," he added generously, "we would say the same of our own Government. Can you tell me of a single decent action in your whole history?"

I cited the handing back of self-government to the Boer Republics within three years of conquering them. No one had told him of this, and he said, "Well, if you did that it must have been because you jolly well knew you had to!"

I got hot under the collar. "You are utterly mistaken. We did it because we had a Premier who thought we had been in the wrong, and he set things right the first minute he could—long before anyone expected us to keep our word."

"All right," he said contemptuously. "We'll admit that you *once* did a decent thing."

His sub-editor was sorry for me, and said: "You were rather decent about slavery, weren't you?"

"I think we were."

History is a depressing record. Almost the only action I can recall that I could put beside those two actions, as on the highest level of statesmanship and entirely voluntary, was when in 1603 men who were neither particularly good nor patriotic brought England and Scotland after Elizabeth's death into one political connection, though it meant accepting a worthless king. Our countries would otherwise have remained in eternal petty bickering—two 'Balkan' states, always in warfare and threats of warfare.

I believe we are now as clearly faced with decisions immensely important for mankind, and ourselves first of all, as we were when Elizabeth died. If we cannot act with vision and frank acceptance of risk for moral ends we are not ourselves. As Mr. Bonar Law said, in an aside in the

House of Commons, "After all, we are a very great nation!" We are—so great that we can afford everything, except to persist in a course that is ethically indefensible.

It is widely believed that both the Viceroy and Mr. Amery (who since he took over the India Office has spoken to Indians as to equals) wanted to go much farther. Men freely admit among themselves that after the war we are bound to offer India the status of a Dominion—our comrade and equal. Why refuse it now? Cut away the leading strings from the freedom we say we are offering, and you will find Indian leaders neither pedantic nor unreasonable. There is a weariness of this quarrel which of itself will go far to end it.

I believe that we are far closer to a settlement with India—as well as to a disastrous break—than the brief cabled news justifies us in thinking.

The Viceroy's offer is in friendly tones, and speaks sympathetically of Indians' desire to frame their own Constitution. Even the sentence I quoted is blunt, and not patronising.

We shall not win this war except on moral and emotional levels. The Nazi drive is not all induced by fear and authority. Germany has known a revolution. But we can offer the world a nobler one, free from terror and cruelty.

If Indians are good enough to die with us they are good enough to be trusted.

And if India joins us of her own free will—what will the wretched story of the last twelve months matter?



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